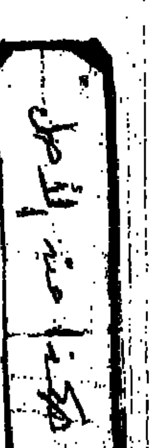
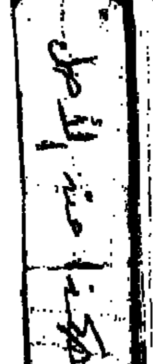




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US needs to decide where its monetary policy is going

Frankfurter Allgemeine

No-one can say for sure how the dollar will fare in the days and weeks ahead. Even if foreign exchange markets behaved in the approved textbook manner, economists would still not be able to forecast exchange rates exactly.

Economic theory can, however, outline fairly reliable trends. It can, for instance, explain the long-term movement of exchange rates and tell when politics upsets markets rather than pacifying them.

These may be strictly limited accomplishments but they ought surely to be put to use in central banks' monetary policy decisions.

Day-to-day fluctuations in the exchange rate of the dollar are actuated by an almost incalculable number of motives for buying or selling, of moods and expectations.

But in the longer term changes in exchange rates are attributable to capital movements, the flow of goods and the monetary policies pursued by economies involved in the trade in goods and capital.

The dollar's appreciation and subsequent depreciation over the past two years certainly presents economists with no insuperable problems.

America's current account deficit holds the key, and it in turn is due to Americans — the Federal government, US investors and consumers — wanting to spend more than their national product.

There is nothing intrinsically reprehensible about that. Loans are part and parcel of modern business. Put to productive use they can be mainsprings of growth.

When Americans raise loans on capital markets the lenders need dollars to offer them. The demand for dollars send the exchange rate skyward and the dollar appreciates in value.

Without this appreciation the capital transfer could not come about.

Borrowers who raise loans basically don't want cash, however. They want to buy goods, and it is this flow of goods that triggers the revaluation.

In this case it is a dollar revaluation or, depending on viewpoint, a deutschemark or yen devaluation, which promptly improves the competitive position of German or Japanese exporters.

This process sets a countervailing trend in motion. Export earnings and payments made from the dollars loaned boost the supply of dollars in exchange markets and the dollar depreciates in turn.

US manufacturers then grow more competitive in international markets and America not only repays its loans in cash but also supplies the rest of the world with goods it had previously borrowed, as it were.

The US current account deficit is thus reduced.

This process cannot be observed in laboratory conditions. The world is in a constant state of flux. Many effects of economic changes are superimposed.

But this is how the mechanics of capital transfers, exchange rate changes and current account balances work.

Anyone who proposes to harness this meaningful interaction of loans and flows of goods must, however, accept all the effects the mechanics of exchange rates trigger.

For political reasons the Americans preferred not to do so in respect of exchange rates...

The Americans are "to blame" for the confusion that reigns in foreign exchange markets not by virtue of their current account deficit but in respect of the evident contradictions in what they want.

If you want to live on credit you have to offer an attractive, i.e. high, rate of interest, which the Americans did.

At the same time they want to cut interest rates to encourage US corporations to step up their investment.

The additional import of goods is essential to ensure that the international transfer of capital is effected, but US manufacturers feel this foreign competition is a pain in the neck.

American politicians willingly accept the capital offered yet criticise the lenders' current account surpluses — which are an inevitable consequence of the capital transfer.

US monetary policy grows increasingly shaky as a result of the irreconcilable demands made on it.

It is expected to keep interest rates low and promote investment by means of ample liquidity while at the same time being expected to boost foreign lenders' confidence in dollar stability.

It is expected to support the dollar's exchange rate to underpin this confidence, yet dollar depreciation is also considered desirable to ease the pressure of competition on US manufacturers. In terms of conventional economics this amounts to squaring the circle, which accounts for attempts to negotiate a contradiction in terms by means of arrangements such as the Plaza agreement and the Louvre accord. They aim to arrive at a common denominator on irreconcilable interest rate, money supply, exchange rate and current account targets — and to do so in keeping with political expediency but at times against the rules of logic.

Markets lose their sense of orientation.

US monetary policy is at times expansionary, at times restrictive.

What expectations of stability can possibly result? What rational basis can there possibly be for exchange rates, especially on futures markets?

The dollar is fluctuating in the unpredictable pattern of politics.

Foreign exchange markets ought to be allowed a period of peace and quiet.

No-one knows for sure where the dollar really stands.

A low-valued dollar is best in keeping with the US current account deficit, but it needn't be a "weak" dollar as long as US money policy stays on an even keel.

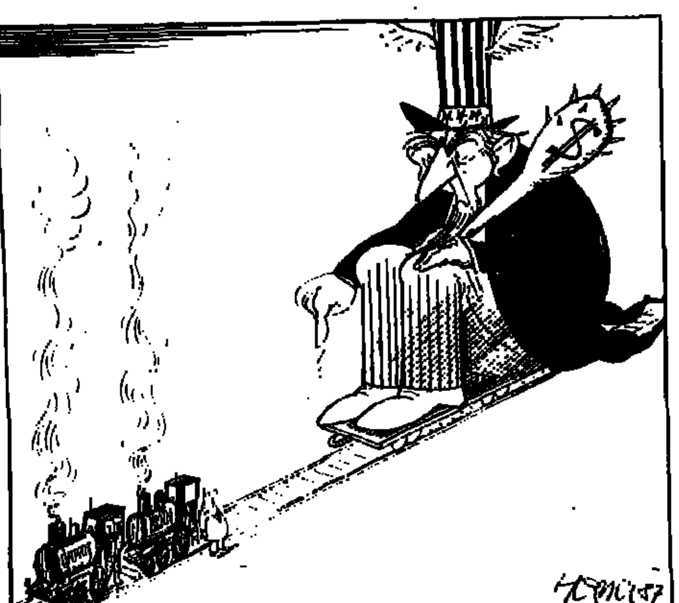
Markets have the ability to convert such different economic pointers as a current account deficit and the central bank's money supply into an exchange rate taking both factors into account.

US policy must decide what it wants: foreign capital with all that entails or curbing expenditure in keeping with scarce funds.

The foreign exchange market will then by itself arrive at the "right" dollar exchange rate.

Hans D. Barbier

(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung für Deutschland, 5 November 1987)



(Cartoon: Walter Hanel/Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)

A bank-rate gesture by the Bundesbank

The Bundesbank has cut its Lombard rate (which applies to loans it makes to other German banks) from 5 to 4.5 per cent. The securities-repurchase rate has been cut from 3.8 to 3.5 per cent.

The stock exchange, the dollar, the US budget deficit and the Frankfurt Bundesbank's Lombard rate reduction are all closely linked. But can anyone still work out what the link is?

Contrary to optimistic US expectations there has been no change yet in the key factor, the American budget deficit.

Treasury Secretary James Baker, knowing the shortcomings of US finance policy, opted several weeks ago for an approach popular with politicians in a tight spot: he decided that attack was the best means of defence.

Mr Baker attacked the Bundesbank's interest rate policy heedless of the consequences. Higher interest rates in Germany, he said, were clear evidence that the Bundesbank was no longer abiding by the February 1987 Louvre accord arrangements to stabilise the dollar exchange rate.

This accusation was totally unfounded. Japan is the only country with lower bank lending rates than Germany.

The Bundesbank has gone a step further and reduced by a further half per cent the rate at which it lends cash to banks against collateral.

In domestic terms this is a finely-tuned move to give the German economy a fillip. In external terms it is a noble gesture to the United States.

Yet it is doubtful whether the Frankfurt number-crunchers have taken the wind out of Mr Baker's sails.

He needs Germany as a bogyman behind which to hide American inactivity. He will probably counter by saying that half a per cent was far too little.

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 6 November 1987)

IN THIS ISSUE

■ INTERNATIONAL

Charles, the prince who tries to see the world as it really is

Prince Charles and Lady Diana have been paying an official visit to Germany. Rolf Seelmann-Eggebert, an expert on the British Royal family who was involved in making *Royalty*, a successful TV film about them, wrote this story for *Die Zeit*.

Oddly enough, the more penetrable the grey walls of Buckingham and Kensington Palace have grown, the less clear the contours of Britain's Royal family have become.

While the popular Press descends on every titbit that self-imposed censorship might use to have brushed under the red carpet, those who feel professionally responsible for keeping up the image of the Royals do their best to maintain more traditional standards and appearances.

In common with Her Majesty's irritated subjects the rest of the world waits, like viewers hooked on *Dallas*, for its weekly episode of what might well be serialised as *Palace*.

Since the reality as rule falls well short of the scriptwriters' expectations, details are blown up out of all proportion and the imagination is given a free rein, arguably bridled only by the rider:

"Similarities with living persons are entirely intentional."

Prince Charles, 39 on 14 November, is a child of the electronic era and well versed in its mechanisms.

So he is unlikely to be unduly upset by the distorted picture of him that is portrayed in the media. His training has imbued him with competence and sovereignty.

His public school education, Cambridge history degree and careers in the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy have given him a clearer idea of everyday life than any of his 20 predecessors as Prince of Wales.

Yet he still seems to have an unquenched thirst to see and experience for himself the world as it really is.

When Prince Charles gave us an interview in 1985 for the TV series *Royalty* I asked him whether, on his foreign tours as a special ambassador, he ever gained an opportunity of looking behind the scenes.

"If you can listen and ask the right questions you will learn a lot. On official visits of this kind it is, of course, difficult to see everything you might like to see.

"Your host always wants to show you the sunny side and not the darker side. He isn't made, when all is said and done. Yet you still manage to pick up a great deal."

In Britain Prince Charles takes good care to ensure that the seamier sides are not hidden from him. Shortly before our interview he was revealed to have slipped out of the palace in disguise one evening.

He was not engaged in a 1,001 Nights-style adventure along the lines of Haroun al-Rashid; he merely wanted to see at first hand what life was like for London's homeless.

Much of what he does is not recorded in the court news. For years he has worked untiringly to make his personal contribution toward reducing Britain's appalling level of youth unemployment.

Prince's Trust funds have been invested in a venture to enable young people to set up craft enterprises of their own.

He misses no opportunity of referring to the fate of urban areas that have forfeited their industrial basis and are slowly going to rack and ruin.

Mrs Thatcher's government has now also stated its intention of doing more for the inner cities. If at first you don't succeed,...

Is Britain's heir-apparent a "prince of the poor"? Certainly not. His hobbies are expensive. He likes the upper crust.

If, by mistake, his mother is mentioned other than as "Her Majesty the Queen" he can turn into a block of ice.

Yet behind this formality he is an *extremely frank and thoughtful person* — so frank as to be able to admit to feeling frustrated.

He said in our interview that he wasn't a city person. He preferred to pay his Cornish tenants regular visits, learning from them in what was clearly a quest for the simple life.

He sounded a note of genuine enthusiasm, saying:

"Country life is tremendous for the soul. When you sit at a desk all the time, reading paperwork, rushing from one appointment to the next, it's marvellous for the soul to get out and about.

"Manual labour does you a power of good: mucking out a cowstall, lending a hand with calving, milking cows, repairing dry-stone walls. I come back a completely different person."

In certain British circles — the ones that tend to set the fashion — such confessions are greeted with disdain.

Against the background of a political Establishment that retains an unswerving belief in technological progress and economic growth, the Prince's interest in organic farming, his criticism of modern town planning and his support for alternative medicine at times make him appear somewhat odd.

At times he also overshoots the mark. *Public condemnation* of a project by the Prince of Wales amounts, in British society, to an execution.

Even so, Prince Charles can be relied on, until such time as he is finally obliged, on assuming the throne, to hold his tongue, to say what he thinks.

It runs in the family. He has learnt from his father how to ruffle political feelings.

His marriage with the then Lady Diana Spencer in 1981 was most fortunate, and not just because their two sons, one of whom is heir to the throne, now romp round Kensington Palace.

Princess Diana is a young woman who has joined the Royal family without entirely adjusting to and conforming with her new surroundings.

She exercises an influence on how her children are brought up. She introduces Prince Charles to pop stars he had previously not even heard of.

She is trying to open his eyes to a youth culture that has, after all, made its mark on an entire generation of his future subjects. It is only natural for this dialogue to lead to tension now and then...

No-one admires Princess Diana's transformation to superstar status more than her husband. Even so, when they make a joint public appearance he notes time and again that more attention is paid in the media to his wife's wardrobe than to his own well-chosen words.

Yet when they part company to shake hands on opposite sides of the street, Prince Charles has been known to sense the disappointment of people on his side of the street.

He thens asks them, sounding a note of comic despair, whether he should give the flowers to his wife. Everyone senses, however, that he finds it anything but amusing.

As kings and queens do not as a rule retire, Prince Charles may not ascend the throne until an age when others are thinking in terms of retirement.

That suits him fine. He has never made any secret of the fact that he would not like to take over from his mother as long as she can still handle her duties.

Sir John Colville, Churchill's private secretary and in that capacity a man who was in close contact with the Queen in her younger days, has mooted a possible deadline for the transfer of power.

"I feel the Queen will stay until her golden jubilee," he said. That is not until 2002.

Rolf Seelmann-Eggebert

(Die Zeit, Hamburg, 6 November 1987)

A steady hand on Austria's rudder

Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, who had talks in Bonn with Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher, has earned a reputation for consistency and continuity in 16 months at the helm in Vienna.

He regularly succeeds in walking the brink of the seething volcano as though a red carpet were laid out specially for him.

Even in his own Socialist Party, the leading party in Austria's coalition government, he leads a remarkably exalted existence.

At lower levels political adversaries may admit to making each other sick, as Economic Affairs Minister Robert Graf said of the Freedom Party, or Liberals, and vice-versa.

But the Chancellor remains in a bright light, like an icon, for all to see. His relationship with the Socialist Party is pale and intended, by virtue of a classical division of labour, to remain so.

At the Socialists' 30th party conference the SPÖ leader, ex-Chancellor Fred Sinowatz, was reaffirmed in office, which merely meant that the Chancellor need hardly trouble himself with ideological details.

All Austria seems now to be run on the basis of a sensitive division of labour system governed by a nine-letter password: Vranitzky.

There can be no doubt that the Chancellor has taken over, and done so readily, the external representation of his country where President Waldheim has difficulty in doing so.

The Chancellor's Office has become the port of call for foreign visitors who are reluctant to call on the President.

Visitors also hand in at the Chancellor's Office invitations that would normally be extended to the head of state.

When normal service may be resumed is an issue Austrians, including the Socialists, prefer not to consider.

The party conference rejected by 198 votes to 101 a resolution calling on Dr Waldheim to resign as President.

Chancellor Vranitzky, who was little known abroad as chief executive of the Austrian Länderbank, is busy building up an international profile.

It is not that Foreign Minister Alois Mock is not busy and active in international affairs; he has enough appointments to keep him busy round the clock.

But Herr Mock is also Vice-Chancellor and leader of his own party, which sidelines him at times, allowing the Chancellor freedom he uses to the full.

In foreign relations Austria's ties with the Federal Republic of Germany both assume increasing importance and grow steadily more difficult.

Issues of transit facilities across the Austrian Alps have long ceased to be seen as a problem to be even approached, let alone solved, by means of *road tolls*.

The Austrian government has impressed upon the European Community in Brussels and the relevant government departments in Bonn that the problem has all-European dimensions.

In other economic and industrial contexts Austria has similarly come to see itself more and more as part of Western Europe even though it may not be a member of the European Community.

Austrian government policy is now aimed at an approximation to the Community's planned European internal market. So keenest attention is paid to the different views voiced in Bonn on relevant topics.

Lutz Stavenhagen, Minister of State at the (Bonn) Chancellor's Office, assured the Austrian People's Party in Villach there were several promising options for enabling Austria and other Efta countries to fall in with European economic integration.

"The option of a united Europe must always be kept open," he said.

Horst Teltschik, another of Chancellor Kohl's close advisers, sounded a markedly different note in a talk he gave in Vienna.

East Bloc diplomats listened attentively as he drew up a "vision" of a joint defence strategy for the 12 European Community countries.

A long-term target of this kind, as outlined by Herr Teltschik, would be bound to clash with Austria's neutral status and hamper the Austrian policy of rapprochement.

Chancellor Vranitzky's aim is *to arrive at a constructive dialogue* with Bonn on what, he feels, *are* crucial issues for both Austria and Europe.

The Viennese argument amounts to a division of Western Europe into an economically powerful European Community and a cordon of "peripheral states" at the receiving end of discriminatory treatment being not only to the detriment of both.

It is also said to be an impediment to relaxation of East-West ties.

Engelbert Washietl

(Rheinischer Merkur/Christ und Welt, Bonn, 6 November 1987)

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■ HOME AFFAIRS

Barschel affair and stock-market slide are rocking the conservative boat

NÜRNBERGER Nachrichten

The conservative union (CDU-CSU) is going through a rough patch: no-one knows how the CDU intends wriggling its way out of the morass produced by the Barschel affair in Schleswig-Holstein, the most northern *Land*.

It is little consolation that the crisis of credibility relates to all political parties as well as the system of parliamentary democracy as a whole.

It is still not clear how much more dirt the affair will dig up or how many politicians and civil servants in the country's northernmost state will suffer in its wake.

The crisis of confidence triggered by the worldwide stock market crash is just as serious.

The slump in share values not only affects those who hold shares and do the loudest complaining.

Once the basis of economic confidence starts to crumble prospects for the economy as a whole become gloomier.

The result may be a recession of the US economy and an American cold could lead to pneumonia in Europe.

It cannot, therefore, be ruled out that a crisis will break out in Germany too and that the response of consumers and investors will adversely affect the state of the economy. This would also culminate in a recession.

It is hardly surprising that the stock market slump has got the Bonn government worried.

With bated breath it awaits the daily stock market reports for signs of an improvement or a further exacerbation of the stock market crash.

It is now generally accepted that the situation could get even worse.

As many people start looking for political scapegoats in the face of a crisis both the conservative union and the FDP are concerned that the government's trump card in disputes with the Social Democrats, its competence in the economic policy field, may lose its value. And what happens then?

Of course, other problems confronting the CDU and CSU, as the most important partners in the Bonn government coalition, might then pale into insignificance. The operative word here, however, is "might".

The tax reform package, for example, which has been presented as the government's *pièce de résistance* during this legislative period, looks like backfiring.

Today, no-one talks about the relief the reform will bring, but only about the sacrifices that will have to be made to get it financed.

Shift and night workers are up in arms, car industry workers are protesting, and the Bavarian *Land* government is doing all it can to prevent a reduction in federal government subsidies for canteen food in the knowledge that this will adversely affect civil servants too.

The withholding tax on interest payments, which looks like becoming an administrative monstrosity, has by no means been digested by all conservative politicians.

CSU chairman Franz Josef Strauss has already dissociated himself from this form of taxation.

This comes as no surprise in view of his political instinct for what is popular and what isn't.

Although the tax reform seems to melting away in the hands of government propagandists there has been no attempt to launch a counteroffensive.

The government seems to be preoccupied with efforts to cushion criticism and dispel misgivings.

It may have to pay the price for a serious planning error at the beginning of the year when the coalition announced and praised the envisaged tax reform as the achievement of the century without explaining how it was to be financed.

The moment of truth came after the state elections; the seemingly clever strategy turned out to be a gigantic miscalculation.

Those who hope that time will heal all wounds and that the blessings of the tax reform will eventually pacify the critics once they notice the financial benefits in their own pockets have no reason to be overoptimistic.

Apart from sorting out the problem of how to finance the statutory pension scheme, itself a tough nut to crack, the government will have to face up to the challenge of reducing costs in the health system.

The CDU has got particularly cold feet in this field.

This is understandable, since any effort to prevent health costs from spiralling means that the conservative union will have to demand sacrifices from all its political "clients".

An all-round offensive will be needed against patients, doctors, hospitals, health insurance companies and, last but not least, the mighty pharmaceuticals industry.

There's no point beating about the bush, however, since the alternative is a catastrophe.

No-one can escape unscathed if the latter is to be prevented, even though the CDU may lose some voters along the way.

Although the FDP may be slightly better off than the senior coalition partner it also has its problems.

It can be expected to put its foot down when envisaged measures adversely affect the traditionally liberal electoral clientele.

The coalition, therefore, will probably be put to the test in a field in which a united stance is absolutely essential.

Doubts have already been voiced that the conservative union is unable to lay claim to a clear line of policy.

Baden-Württemberg Premier Lothar Späth (CDU) has expressed his concern that infighting within the CDU could weaken the party.

Späth referred, on the one hand, to a faction which is trying to vie with the FDP "for a Lambsdorff-style push-and-shove society" and to a faction which is competing with the SPD "for maximum welfare benefits without a financing basis".

And what about the Christian Democratic employees' association CDA, *with its new chairman Ulf Fink*, which seems to be moving even further to the left?

Adversities

Or the conservative union's economic policy advisory councils, which are much closer to Lambsdorff than the unruly CDA?

The CDU will have to cope with all these adversities before it can lay down the line of a coalition policy with the Free Democrats.

This assessment of potential conflict does not even take into account the possible opposition of the CSU to certain policy suggestions forwarded by the CDU.

Helmut Bauer

(Nürnberger Nachrichten, 30 October 1987)

Internal SPD report criticises party image and performance

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

The Social Democrats set an unrealistic goal for themselves by trying to win an absolute majority in the general election in January, says an internal party report.

A special party commission headed by its former business manager, Peter Glotz, listed 23 points of criticism. It found that the effect of promoting Johannes Rau as a better alternative to Chancellor Kohl was overestimated.

It also found that the campaign was not aggressive enough, that a shadow cabinet should have been drawn up and that internal disputes lost the party voters.

The commission report is being considered by the party's national executive.

Deputy party chairman Johannes Rau feels that the SPD is running the risk of "abandoning its character as a people's party and degenerating into a denominational grouping".

The commission's analysis and Rau's remarks were among the major topics on the agenda the executive committee meeting.

In a closed meeting in the middle of November the SPD party council will also take a closer look at the whys and wherefores of the outcome of the SPD's general election campaign.

This painful soul-searching could gash open wounds which have just healed.

Most politicians in the SPD, however, feel that this is the only way to further the party's cause.

Under the chairmanship of the SPD's former business manager Peter Glotz the commission drew a number of self-critical conclusions.

The overriding objective of the SPD's general election campaign, that was to achieve a majority on its own, was criticised by the commission as unrealistic.

This goal, the commission claimed, had a demobilising effect.

Furthermore, disputes within the party damaged the credibility of the election objective, the commission said.

The campaign itself, it added, was not conducted as aggressively as it should have been and some party conference resolutions were too fresh to be credibly conveyed to potential voters.

The impact of the campaign promoting Johannes Rau as a much better alternative as Chancellor than Helmut Kohl was overestimated.

A total of 23 points of criticism was listed, including the statement that the party had failed to present a shadow cabinet.

The commission's other findings are more important for the party's future.

The ability of the SPD to convince voters "that industry and employment are in good hands" under an SPD government will be decisively important if it intends obtaining political majorities.

The SPD is regarded as competent in the social policy field, but not in the field of modernising society and industry or pursuing a successful fiscal policy, the analysis pointed out.

Although the development of the economy has also benefitted the coalition most voters, the commission said, felt that the CDU/CSU has "a pronounced economic and fiscal policy competence profile".

The commission's analysis rejects the assertion that the SPD loses out in regions in which service industries prevail.

Findings reveal that the SPD as the party of social security and solidarity lost substantial ground in prosperous urban conurbations with a favourable economic structure, whereas it did well in regions "which are undergoing a crisis or radical structural change".

Johannes Rau questioned the significance of this particular finding.

In a letter to the commission he warned against simply "backing a new horse" now that the "shallow service thesis" has been refuted.

Rau feels that it is more important to elaborate political policies "which voters with varying value orientations" can support.

In reality, Rau complained, the SPD has done quite the opposite, addressing *only* those voters who approve of all (a word which was underlined in Rau's letter) SPD policy decisions.

One sentence in Rau's letter may make some party colleagues wonder whether the deputy chairman supports all party resolutions.

These resolutions, Rau emphasised, should not fetter the party's activities, but serve as a lasso for as many voters as possible.

"Otherwise," Rau explained, "we run the risk of abandoning our character as a people's party and degenerating into a denominational grouping".

This concern alone provides more food for thought than can be dealt with during a two-day executive committee meeting.

Dietrich Möller

(Der Tagesspiegel, Berlin, 20 October 1987)

■ STATE SECURITY

Policemen shot dead by demonstrators

Two policemen were shot dead and nine others injured, one critically, when they tried to disperse demonstrators, some wearing masks, in Frankfurt. The riot developed from a demonstration by about 200 against a new runway at Frankfurt airport, *which has been a controversial* issue for several years and the scene of several violent demonstrations. One man has been arrested in connection with the latest violence and a 9mm pistol and a flare gun have been seized, together with ammunition. Stefan Geiger reports for *Stuttgarter Zeitung*.

Politically motivated use of force reached a new and dangerous level when two policemen were shot and killed, the first to die in this way, during a demonstration in Frankfurt.

At the time of writing a third police officer's condition was critical, while eight others were seriously injured.

Free-for-alls at demonstrations are bad enough, not to mention arson or the use of ball bearings as projectiles.

But to fire at police officers with pistols as though you were taking pot shots at clay pigeons testifies to an entirely new dimension of criminal energy.

Even if the shots turn out to have been fired by a solitary marksman, they have changed the climate of opinion in Germany for some time to come.

Who can blame the police if from now on they are less ready, in critical situations, to put a damper on their emotions and build bridges rather than to draw their truncheons first and think afterwards?

The shooting of the two policemen at a protest demonstration to mark an anniversary in connection with the new Frankfurt airport runway clearly shows yet again that politically motivated use of force has freed itself from the last conceivable link with recognisable ideology and ended in sheer, unadulterated madness.

Killing police officers in connection with a runway that has long been taken into service makes as little sense as fire-bombing branches of a retail food store for selling South African produce.

The culprits may have felt their call for a boycott of South African goods justified fire-bombing the stores, but in fact the stores did not even stock the controversial Cape produce.

As always when violence of this kind occurs, politicians use strong words. Many who might well have made better use of quieter times to take appropriate action are now clamouring for tougher legislation.

There will be now be no avoiding the classification of wearing camouflage at demonstrations as a criminal rather than a civil offence (a relatively minor issue into which the Bonn coalition seems to have haplessly sunk its teeth).

If that were the only political damage the use of force were to have done, it would not, perhaps, be so bad. But tougher legislation is unlikely to be the least use.

Those who are prepared to kill others

Continued on page 6

Terrorism unbeaten but no longer threat to nation

Ten years ago, employers' leader Hanns-Martin Schleyer was kidnapped and a Lufthansa jet, with 87 passengers and crew on board, was hijacked to Mogadishu.

The airliner was recaptured on the runway, its passengers freed and the hijackers killed by a special anti-terrorist squad flown out from Bonn.

Red Army Faction (RAF) terrorists then jointly committed suicide in Stammheim jail, Stuttgart, and Herr Schleyer was murdered by his abductors.

A comparison of today's political desperadoes with the situation a decade ago is indispensable for an assessment of terrorism, the threat it poses and the strategy of the present RAF generation.

The conclusions from this comparison are instructive, even for politicians who are convinced the best way to deal with terrorism is to introduce ever tougher legislation.

The first lesson is not encouraging. It is that the RAF and the fragmented groups that have followed in its footsteps are not defeated.

The hydra of terrorism has grown fresh heads and continues to beat its blood-stained path round Germany.

Its victims have included US servicemen, German industrialists such as MTU board chairman Zimmermann and Siemens executive Kurt Beckurts, and Bonn government officials such as Gerold von Braunmühl of the Foreign Office.

Herr von Braunmühl was shot and killed in Bonn almost nine years to the day after the storming of the hijacked Lufthansa airliner in Mogadishu.

His killers used the pistol that killed Hanns-Martin Schleyer.

This deliberate choice of weapon was intended to show not only that there were personal links between the killers of the two men but also that the killings formed part of a "tradition."

Mogadishu and Stammheim, names that stand for the darkest day of German terrorism, clearly prompted the murder of Gerold von Braunmühl as a warning that the RAF was still a force to be reckoned with.

Yet Germany's urban guerrillas have in reality grown powerless — other than still being capable of committing murder and mayhem.

The second lesson to be learnt from a comparison of 1977 and 1987 is that even though terrorists may continue to kill and bomb they are not going to put the state out of joint, force its authorities to their knees and send its citizens on to the barricades.

Ten years after the "German autumn" of Schleyer and Mogadishu this is a point on which we can rest assured.

In 1977 anything seemed possible. A good dozen terrorists kept the entire country breathless, seemed to have the state at their mercy and, arguably, even to be in a position to force the authorities to surrender.

Ten years ago the RAF was closer to its objective, in an interlude that seems eerie and a nightmare in retrospect, than it is ever again likely to be.

It put the state in a quandary the democratic system of government is poorly equipped to handle.

When the state is so helpless as to have to yield to pressure by a handful of terrorists, people will lose confidence in its authority and ability to act.

Yet if it sets sentiment aside and resorts to arguably unconstitutional methods in an attempt to stem the terrorist tide, it may well itself come to be seen as worth fighting by many members of the public.

It is a "heads I win, tails you lose" situation. Whatever the authorities did, the RAF remained a threat to the community.

Since the abduction of Berlin CDU leader Peter Lorenz early in 1975 the state has decided that it is better to set sentiment aside than to appear helpless.

For a week the Federal government danced to the tune called by the terrorists who held Herr Lorenz captive. It released six convicted terrorists who were flown to Yemen. Several of them later returned to Germany and resumed their terrorist trail.

Bonn was harshly criticised for sacrificing the life of Hanns-Martin Schleyer and risking those of the 87 passengers and crew of the Lufthansa airliner in 1977 by adopting a hard-line approach to the terrorists.

Many people were no less upset that the authorities did not stop short at what Helmut Schmidt called the borderline of constitutional government but went well beyond it in their bids to trace the terrorists.

For a brief period the police sent the lawmakers packing, the *Bundeskriminalamt* emerged as arguably the most powerful institution in the country and decisions were arrived at not in the Bundestag or by the Cabinet but by crisis staffs for whom no provision was made in Basic Law, the 1949 Bonn constitution.

Constitutional safeguards were set aside, the system of political checks and balances was no longer 100-per-cent operational and even the Press temporarily waived its responsibility.

Yet even a no-holds-barred *manhunt* is doomed to failure when the authorities prove unable to use the means at their disposal.

This — arguably the third lesson to be learnt — was certainly the case 10 years ago when the police failed to follow up early reports that could have led them to where Herr Schleyer was held prisoner.

It is now clear that terrorism, and not the system of constitutional government, was the loser in 1977.

The RAF may not have ceased to exist but it has long lacked the potential to launch large-scale blackmail bids that it commanded 10 years ago.

All it retains is the ability to mindlessly murder individuals of symbolic *social significance*, and even in this connection its leeway has narrowed.

Gerold von Braunmühl, the terrorists' last victim, was a Foreign Office official with no special protection, a sitting duck, as it were.

He was a minor figure who had devoted his diplomatic career to the cause of coming to terms with the East and was to be branded by his murderers, who have sought in vain to enlist the support of the peace movement, as a "covert diplomat of imperialist war strategy."

That was a final declaration of ideological bankruptcy by a handful of confused terrorists who were still capable of terror but no longer — the fourth lesson to be learnt — able to make political headway.

Gerold von Braunmühl's brothers made this point clear in an open letter to his murderers, saying:

"You and your terrorism will get nowhere in combating injustice and violence committed by governments and the state.

"Your murders will bring us nowhere nearer to a world more fit for people to live in. Your bullets may make their mark, but not your arguments."

Joachim Hauck

(Nürnberger Nachrichten, 14 October 1987)

■ THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Bid to take the higgledy out of piggledy by rationalising rates of VAT

STUTTGARTER ZEITUNG

Every year, millions of Europeans are baffled by a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon each time they cross a European border.

Thirty years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome customs duties no longer exist in the European Community. So why are there still border checks, customs posts and customs officials?

The situation is all the more absurd in view of the fact that a customs union was set up in the Community in 1968 and trade within the EEC has been duty-free for years.

In reality, the European Community still consists of a dozen separate markets, each subject to national rules and regulations.

One of the most stubborn barriers to the evolution of a free exchange of labour and goods as well as a genuine Community market is the harmonisation of national taxation systems.

Tobacco tax in Greece and France is much lower than in Germany and Denmark; the tax on alcohol is high in Denmark and low in Italy.

To prevent a distortion of competition within the Community these taxes have to be aligned to levels in respective importing countries through reimbursement or additional tax. So customs officials are still needed.

The Community's government leaders and heads of state have set their ministerial officials the target date of

market" into reality.

Intentions

In summer this year the European Commission declared its firm intention to eliminate one of the major obstacles to this ambitious goal.

The British Community Commissioner responsible for this field, Lord Cockfield, has already drawn up detailed proposals for an alignment of the Community's varying value added and excise taxes.

The discussion of this problem, which is almost as old as the Community itself, is now entering a decisive phase.

extremely confusing network of differing taxation systems is hampering harmonisation efforts in this field.

France has half-a-dozen VAT rates, whereas Britain either imposes a standard rate of 15 per cent or no VAT at all.

The VAT rate in individual member states varies between the reduced rate of 1 per cent on certain goods in Belgium to 36 and 38 per cent respectively in Greece and Italy on luxury articles such as jewellery and furs.

The Commission has compiled a more exact list of even greater differences in excise duties.

Of course, Brussels knows that the historically evolved systems of taxation in individual countries cannot be "Europeanised" at one fell swoop.

The aim, however, is to ensure enough harmonisation to prevent price distortions and make border controls superfluous.

As of 1992 it is hoped that the complicated and extremely bureaucratic system of a border compensation for varying tax levels will no longer be needed.

Up to now, goods which are exported from one Community member country to another have been exempted from tax, exporters paid back any excess payments they may have made, and taxes charged again on these products in the importing country.

The European Commission suggests aligning the rates of value added taxation in member countries by 1992 at the latest and at the same time fixing Community-wide excise tax levels for tobacco, alcohol and mineral oils.

The Community's tax experts in Brussels have opted for a system of VAT rates resembling the German system: that is, both a standard rate and a reduced rate for basic consumer goods such as food, heating oil, gas, electricity, water, medicines, books, transport costs, magazines and newspapers.

To cushion the difficulties such an adjustment may produce the Commission is not calling for a Europe-wide streamlining of value added taxation systems, but merely for an alignment to a flexible tax rate margin.

The Commission would like the standard VAT rate to be above 14 per cent and below 20 per cent and the re-

all Community countries by 1992.

Greece, for example, would have to introduce value added tax.

From Bonn's point of view the Commission's proposal does not constitute a major problem, since the German VAT rates of 14 and 7 per cent are already within the "target corridor" and would not have to be raised or lowered.

Other countries however, will find it more difficult. Britain and Ireland do not levy VAT on food and medicine.

The new system would have serious social implications. Four other Community countries also have goods which are exempted from VAT.

Denmark, with its high standard VAT rate of 22 per cent, and Ireland (25 per cent) will have the biggest problems...

If these two countries lower their VAT rates to the ceiling level of 20 per cent envisaged by the Commission, tax revenue losses will be big.

The deficit would have to be filled by an increase in direct tax — which would anger taxpayers.

Because of this, Lord Cockfield has announced that Brussels will demonstrate maximum flexibility and tolerate deviations from the planned target range for a transitional period.

Britain and Ireland, for example, are to be allowed to retain their zero VAT rates for certain products after 1992.

The Commission proposals on excise duties are also likely to come up against national obstacles.

Both the taxation structures and the consumer habits of individual Community member states vary a lot.

Social and health policy objectives, which have nothing to do with tax policies, must also be taken into consideration.

So a process of European alignment here will probably be even more complicated.

In spite of the fact that this is a highly controversial political field the Commission has nevertheless suggested the introduction of Community-wide standard rates of taxation for petrol, diesel fuel, heating oil, alcohol and tobacco.

Some of the proposals Brussels has made will stir up already existing hornets' nests.

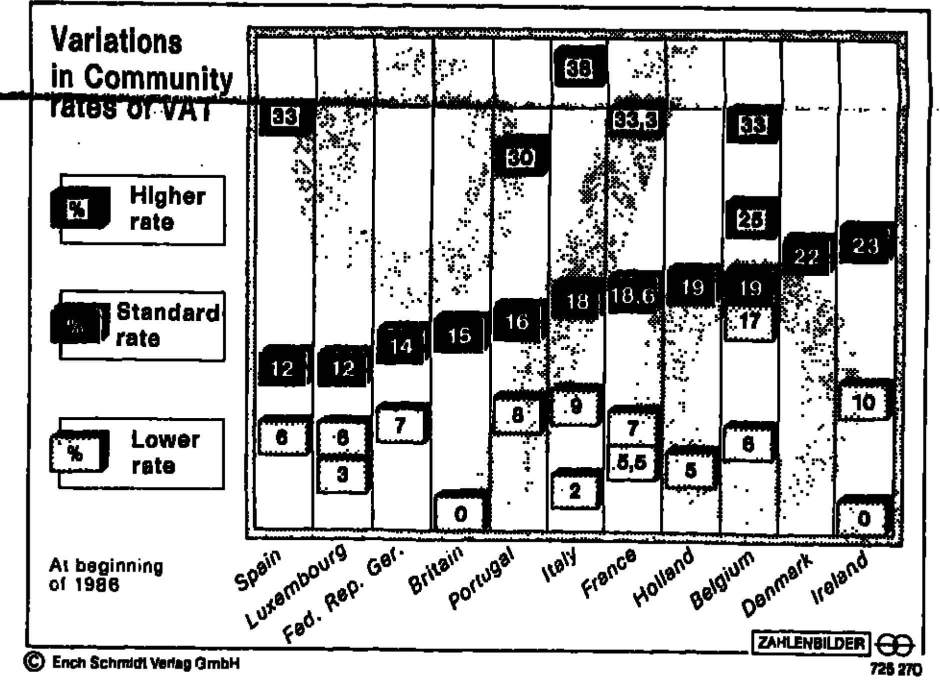
Will Bavarian beer drinkers, for example, who are already ill-disposed towards Brussels following the dispute over West German beer purity regulations, accept a 12 per cent increase in the price of their beer?

If the Commission's proposals on excise taxes are approved German consumers will have to dig deeper into their pockets.

Four-star petrol, for example, will then cost 19 per cent more, wine thirteen per cent, spirits 5 per cent and cigarettes 2 per cent.

Environmental protectionists and health policy experts are the only groups likely to give their wholehearted approval to the Commission's proposals.

The Commission, for example, suggests introducing the tax relief already granted for unleaded petrol in the Federal Republic of Germany in all Community states.



It also plans to generally raise tobacco tax in an effort to eliminate the unhealthy "vice" by putting financial pressure on smokers.

This fully complies with the Community's "Europe Against Cancer" programme and is assured the Europe-wide approval of non-smokers. The Commission's proposals would have a considerable impact on the budget policies of individual member states.

If these taxation plans are put into practice Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands are likely to have the same tax revenue intake as hitherto.

In France there would be a few francs less in the government treasury.

In Britain, Greece and the Federal Republic of Germany the treasury hopes for a slightly higher revenue as a result of the proposals.

The finance ministers in poor Ireland and rich Denmark, on the other hand, would suffer substantial revenue losses.

Unrealistic

Copenhagen expects a revenue decrease of up to five per cent of its gross domestic product.

In view of the already extremely high taxes in Denmark the Danish finance minister will find it virtually impossible to offset this decrease by raising direct taxation levels.

One high-ranking official in the Danish Finance Ministry remarked that it is "unrealistic to expect Copenhagen to effect a tax adjustment to the level envisaged by Brussels".

Furthermore, the Danes have more fundamental reservations about the fact that Brussels intends fixing taxation levels.

This, they claim, would mean the loss of sovereign powers in the field of economic policy.

Paris has raised similar objections, even though the budgetary impact of the Commission's proposals there would be limited.

The former director-general of the tax administration, Dominique de La Martinière, referred in *Le Monde* to "presumpuousness" by Brussels.

He even suspects a conspiracy between Eurocrats in Brussels and West German Finance Ministry officials, since, in his opinion, the Commission's proposals are fully in line with Bonn's intentions.

Others in France share his scepticism and Paris is worried that individual member states might lose their budgetary decision-making powers and, as a result, the power to determine the course of their own economic policies.

Frenchmen concerned about the possible loss of national independence fear *that this might* lead to a gradual shift of economic policy decision-making powers to Brussels.

The European Commission, on the other hand, argues that it will only be possible to set up an extensive Community market if the obstacles erected by differing taxation systems in the Community are removed.

The long-term advantages of harmonisation in this field, Brussels insists, are greater than the short-term adjustment difficulties individual member countries may encounter.

The Community can only face up to the challenge of the future and outstrip its main rivals, the USA and Japan, with the help of a large European economic area and a free Community market.

Thomas Gack

(Stuttgarter Zeitung, 8 October 1987)

■ THE ECONOMY

Time to stop regarding growth as the sole yardstick of success

The German economy will grow by 2 per cent next year, says the autumn report of the five economic research institutes. Klaus-Peter Schmid looks at the report and reactions to it for Die Zeit.

Matthias Wissmann, CDU economic affairs spokesman in the Bundestag, *said the most significant statement* in the report was that the economy would continue to move upwards next year. In other words, support for the CDU/CSU/FDP coalition.

Hans Apel, of the SPD, of course saw it differently: "The crucial statement is that unemployment will increase in the coming year."

He said the government in its sixth year of office had failed to reach its most important economic and financial goals.

Both Apel and Wissmann are right. The report says the upward trend in the economy would continue, expansion would remain moderate and the number in employment would hardly increase at all.

No decline in the number of unemployed could be expected.

Economic observers have the thankless task of having to make distinctions if they want to be taken seriously.

Politicians have an easier time of it. They can pick out from a report sectors, or even only half a sentence, that accords with their wish to praise or damn the government.

Self-criticism was never a strength of government or forbearance a virtue of the opposition. The overall view gets lost in a parliamentary democracy.

In this year's autumn report the economic experts offer two clear conclusions that should give all politicians of *all colours interested in economic affairs* cause for thought.

In the first place it is again apparent how unreliable (and consequently worthless) forecasts are.

A year ago the institutes said that the 1987 growth rate would be three per cent. At the year's end *it will probably* turn out to be 1.75 per cent, and even that is an optimistic estimate.

The institutes' forecast growth rate for 1988 of two per cent can only be, then, the expression of the hope that it will not continue to decline. Within six months the institutes will be presenting new figures anyway.

This report shows how fruitless it is to discuss whether in the sixth year of Chancellor Kohl's government the Federal Republic is in an economic upturn or whether the downturn has begun.

Since 1983 the national product growth rates have been positive, actually since 1985 they have been sinking. The interpretation is very dependent on the question of definitions.

What is clear is that this does not correspond *to the regular and distinctive cyclical trend* to which we have got used for decades.

What is certain is that unemployment continues to increase, irrespective of how economic changes are named.

That is more crucial than a half per cent lost or gained in the national product.

We should stop looking spellbound at the growth rate and conclude success or failure by the figures after the decimal point.

Growth is essential where there is no growth, where there is nothing to be distribute.

The dominance of this magical figure in political discussion rejects too easily a glance at shifts or even undesirable trends, discussion of which would be no less important.

The report from the five economic research institutes provides material enough for this.

The chapter dealing with foreign trade is particularly interesting. What the five have to say here must be regarded as a provocation by many of our partners, particularly the Americans.

The text reads: "All in all exports will increase stronger in the summer half of the year than they have previously dropped off. The previous year's position will be exceeded."

So in the coming year exports will again increase, if the forecast comes true, mainly to west European countries, and business with American will at least not drop off further.

This will result in a high, provocative surplus on current account of DM65bn.

It is hard to understand how Bonn, in view of an imbalance of this kind, will keep to the view that by *reducing the* trade surplus the Federal *Republic* will contribute to a revival among its partners.

Flourishing foreign trade will bring all the critics abroad into the arena who will regard the lamentations of German exporters about lost markets as specious arguments.

The perspectives the institutes *have* outlined must mean that there will be strong pressure to revalue the *deutschemark*, and Washington will demand even more vehemently that German trading giants should shoulder international responsibilities.

Domestically, the outlook is full of problems. Dependence on exports will continue to grow and a renewed shift in emphasis is to be expected from the "generators of expansion in 1988."

The increase of domestic demand, hardly now the main driving force in the economy, threatens to weaken once more, despite the January tax relief.

Unsatisfactory domestic *demand* is proof, if any is needed, of how wobbly the much-praised, lasting upswing is.

This brings to light another weakness. There is not enough *capital investment*. The institutes claim this means that there is a lack of dynamism in the economy.

The pre-conditions for investment could not be better. Seldom were profits so good or the bank balances of large companies so fat as they are today. But

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are not going to be dissuaded by the threat of harsher penalties from wearing a balaclava or a motorcycle helmet.

Making full use of existing legal provisions would make better sense. Given sufficiently careful preparation, the authorities can unmask even a larger number of demonstrators wearing camouflage, as at a recent Stuttgart demonstration held by sympathisers with the urban guerrilla RAF, or Red Army Faction.

Camouflage in the form of woollen caps and plastic helmets is, in any case, far less dangerous than the fact that the security forces are less and less capable of assessing the potential for political violence.

"They not only know less and less about the hard core of RAF terrorists; they know nothing at all about the even shadier categories of "after-hours terrorists" from the ranks of the "Revolutionary Cells."

They also know too far little about the "autonomous groups" from whose ranks the Frankfurt killers are felt to have come.

The security forces are hampered by the drawback of having failed for months to notch up a major success in their fight against terrorist violence.

Resignation is unlikely to make them redouble their efforts.

What they need is not fresh legislation; they lack inspiring leadership of the kind given by Horst Herold, former head of the *Bundeskriminalamt*, or Federal CID.

Since all other means of bringing the offenders to book have failed, building bridges to those who are prepared to abandon violence is all the more important.

There have lately been a number of surprising and eminently sensible suggestions along these lines by both the judiciary and the *Verfassungsschutz*, the Cologne-based intelligence agency that handles domestic anti-espionage work and monitors political extremism.

Murderers cannot be allowed to get off scot-free, but if a few of the people who have slipped past the brink of terrorism are persuaded to quit, inroads could be made into the hard core of the terrorist scene.

The shock caused by the *Frankfurt* murders among many left-wing *groups* could lead to a salutary clarification.

A number of protest marchers have already heeded the call by Bundestag MP Otto Schily of the Greens for an end to tolerance of the militants.

They have decided to literally part company with advocates of violence and no longer provide them with the cover from which they have benefited at rallies and on protest marches.

One can but hope that others will set aside their aversion to the police, born of years of demonstrating against the new Frankfurt airport runway, and help the authorities to bring the culprits to book.

Even militant demonstrators are now saying they had no intention of encouraging random murders of this kind, so it could be the beginning of a gradual realisation that they have taken a wrong turning.

Two policemen were murdered in Frankfurt. Their killers must not be allowed to exult at having nipped in the bud promising moves toward persuading terrorists and their sympathisers to quit the vicious circle of violence.

Stefan Geiger

(Stuttgarter Zeitung, 4 November 1987)

■ BUSINESS

The biggest mail-order firm in the world moves into the Japanese market

The Hamburg-based mail-order firm, Otto Versand, has become the biggest mail-order operator in the world. In spite of factors such as greater car ownership (and thus greater mobility) working against this type of business, Otto Versand has expanded both its domestic and overseas markets. Half the annual turnover of 11 billion marks is earned outside West Germany. Its purchase in 1982 of *the* fourth largest American mail-order business, Spiegel in Chicago, was a major advance. Now Otto, headed by Michael Otto, son of the founder, is moving into Japan. Gunhild Freese looks at the mail-order pacemaker for the Hamburg weekly, *Die Zeit*.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. A glance at recent German mail-order house catalogues reveals that they are all much the same.

The new Quelle catalogue, for instance, shows shirt-blouses for DM25 each. Hamburg's Otto Versand had the same goods, in the same layout and at the same price in this year's summer catalogue.

In Quelle's winter catalogue there were blouses, pullovers and shirts displayed in metal stands exactly as they were in the Otto catalogue six months before.

An Otto spokesman said: "Quelle knows how successful our catalogues are." Photographs can be copied around, but layouts are not similar by accident.

Neckermann, a mail-order firm based in Frankfurt, has been copying Otto's catalogue ideas for years, but it hasn't done it much good.

At Otto headquarters in the Bramfeld district of Hamburg a spokesman said mockingly that a copy can never be as good as the original.

Otto boss Michael Otto says: "We have a lead of between six months and a year and we shall keep it."

Mail-order houses look to the north and profit from the Otto organisation's ideas. Otto Versand is a cautious company. Michael Otto, son of founder Werner Otto, said: "You should never underestimate the competition." He is now looking for challenges way beyond West Germany's frontiers. The company is on the way to being the only mail-order house that operates worldwide.

Otto Versand has just taken on a country that in the mail-order house business is a developing country, but it has the most marvellous prospects: the Hamburg mail-order house is out to conquer Japan.

Japan has a population of 120 million and has the second largest domestic market in the non-communist world. Until now only small mail-order companies have operated in the country, dealing in specialised goods.

Altogether these small operations do not account for one per cent of the retail business in Japan. In West Germany mail-order houses pick up five per cent of retailing. In Japan there is no well-known mail-order house offering a wide range of goods.

For three years Otto experts have examined the Japanese market, purchasing habits, consumer behaviour and the competition in the retail trade.

Last year, in cooperation with one of Japan's largest trading houses, Sumito, Otto established a joint enterprise, Otto-Sumisho. Otto has a majority holding of 51 per cent in this enterprise.

As was to be expected from Otto Versand the start-up of this enterprise early this year was very cautious.

Michael Otto has kept in mind how Otto Versand began in 1950, when Werner Otto sent out his first 14-page catalogue.

The first two issues of the Otto catalogue that Michael Otto sent out in Japan in February and March of this year were 24 and 36 pages in length respectively.

The catalogue was called *Together* and offered a small selection of goods, taken from the catalogue of the same name that has been used everywhere in the group since last year.

The Japanese catalogue offered, for instance, skirt and jacket sets for the emancipated Japanese woman up to the age of 30, the target group interested in fashions and world trends.

Michael Otto said: "We still have a lot to learn in Japan."

To get the best of the Japanese challenge Michael Otto, who sits on the young company's supervisory board, swotted away at Japanese for nine months so that he could "understand Japanese culture better through the language."

He ordered his team of experts that set up the Japanese operation to take a crash course in the language as well.

Moving into Japan was an important step for the Otto mail-order house, on the road to becoming a worldwide operation. More than a half of annual turnover of DM11bn is now earned abroad.

Since 1980 turnover has been increased by DM5bn by enormous internal growth and the purchase of other companies.

DIE ZEIT

Michael Otto regards it as his mission to turn the family company into an operation of international standards with worldwide interests.

His self-confidence is obvious as is his modesty which goes far beyond North German understatement. He does not make great play of his own personality. He subordinates personal considerations to the job in hand.

The role of the entrepreneur is, for him, one that constantly shoulders social responsibilities.

Michael Otto, who very much shields his family life from the public gaze, is known to outsiders more for what he does than for his personality.

The honorary positions he holds are more for him than just high-sounding titles. He is a vice-president of Hamburg's Chamber of Commerce and Industry and chairman of the consultancy council of Berlin's Import Fair.

He is a patron of the arts and has founded a society of friends of Hamburg's plastic arts college.

He is on the committee of the Werner Otto Foundation that operates a special clinic for handicapped children and a treatment centre for children suffering from cancer.

He also regards environmental protection as one of his socio-political tasks. The new company headquarters in Hamburg's Bramfeld district were constructed in accordance with the latest developments for energy saving.

Michael Otto is also keen to make his customers conscious of what they can do to contribute towards environmental *protection by bringing pressure to bear* on manufacturers, but so far all he has managed to sell are a few energy-saving electrical appliances.

He is, without doubt, the top man on the Otto Versand 11-man board of management. Apart from strategic planning he regards it as his job to coordinate the group's companies, build up the management in subsidiaries and motivate people.

He keeps his people in line and tries to keep down personal conflicts by discussions, private conferences and periodic sessions of group dynamics.

Michael Otto brought off his major coup in 1982 when he purchased America's fourth largest mail-order house, Spiegel of Chicago. For ten years this company had had no growth and nothing particularly exciting as regards profits.

Spiegel was the answer to a prayer for Otto. Normally the Hamburg mail-order house moved into established companies, except in the case of Japan and earlier in Holland, when Otto started from the ground floor.

*With German industry and know-*how the American subsidiary was pushed to a turnover of more than a billion dollars, making it America's third largest mail-order house.

The range of goods offered by Spiegel was geared to the career woman. The main catalogue included famous names from Étienne Aigner to Laura Ashley and Ralph Lauren.

Along with the main catalogue there were 12 specialist catalogues. In these the main population groups, people whose forebears came from Scandinavia, Italy or Ireland, were tempted with merchandise from these countries.

But the main source of Otto Versand's success was the introduction of efficient logistics on the American market.

Instead of having to wait for weeks on end before goods were delivered, usual in the American mail-order business, Spiegel supplied goods two or three days after they were ordered.

The Germans, however, had a lot to learn from the Americans. They are way ahead of the Germans in noting accurately consumer habits, gaining the attention of specific target groups and precise market analyses.

Thanks to an enormous increase in turnover from Spiegel the Otto group has become the largest mail-order house in the world.

But the acquisition of Spiegel was not the only move by a European mail-order house into the difficult American market. It coincided with Michael Otto becoming the boss of his father's business.

He was appointed to the executive board of Werner Otto's company in 1971, responsible for textiles purchasing. The negotiations for Spiegel, that came to an end in January 1982, stimulated Michael Otto's progress.

When in March 1982 he replaced the former management board chairman, Günter Nawrath, he could put his own stamp on the company without having to prove himself to his two successful predecessors, father Werner Otto and Nawrath. But, says Michael Otto, there was no generation conflict.



Learning Japanese . . . Otto's Michael Otto. (Photo: dpa)

He was able to build up a strategy on the basis of what his father and manager Günter Nawrath, unrelated to the Otto family, had created.

Werner Otto was the first to introduce purchasing on account. He built up a network of agents to collect orders and introduced ordering by telephone. An Otto subsidiary, Hermes-Versand, took care of distribution.

From the very early days the Hamburg company tempted its customers with special ranges of goods offered in special catalogues. Otto Versand skilfully expanded its range by buying up competitors.

Today the Hanau mail-order house of Schwab and Heine, a mail-order houses specialising in gifts, belong to the Otto empire along with the linen and lingerie specialists Witt/Weiden, and firms offering women's fashions from Alba-Moden.

The company went abroad for the first time in 1974. Through participation in the French mail-order house 3 Suisses International Otto offers the widest range of mail-order goods in France, Belgium and Spain.

In February this year Otto acquired a share in a small British mail-order house, whose catalogue, *Together*, is now distributed worldwide in the group.

The only "unexplored territory" on the Otto map is Italy. The company is looking for possibilities to get into the Italian market.

Otto Versand's major German competitors, Quelle and Neckermann, have had generation problems. This has not been the case with the Otto family where strict succession rules are applied.

When manager Günter Nawrath took over as chairman of the management board from Werner Otto, the compay founder moved into the supervisory board. Nawrath made the same move when young Michael Otto took over the management of the company.

With the same strict adherence to the rules the board of management handles forward planning and daily affairs.

Michael Otto summed this up by saying: "Everyone has his own way of doing things, everyone takes a different course of action."

The move into Japan does not mean that the company will not look energetically for opportunities to expand elsewhere.

In October, before the 19th, Michael Otto took advantage of the stock ex-

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■ COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

Warnings against letting the disadvantages take over

Informatics, the study of computers and data processing, is a science without which modern living could not be sustained.

Yet the risk of technical dependence is not the only problem — and source of potential catastrophe. Data processing can also, almost imperceptibly, make inroads into personal rights and individual freedoms.

FIFF, short for Forum of Informatics Scientists for Peace and Social Responsibility, was set up three years ago to analyse these risks and warn against them.

It would be wrong to pigeonhole FIFF in traditional left- or right-wing terms.

Just as new technologies have led to the emergence of new jobs and activities, so they have prompted political issues and assessments that transcend party-political barriers.

A Bremen social scientist and informatics specialist, Jürgen Friedrich, neatly summarised the contradictions of life for a critical computer person.

"After a day at work," he told FIFF's third annual meeting in Munich, "you spend the evening with a group campaigning against plans to criss-cross the country with a network of optical cables."

He has polled informatics experts and found that three out of four feel the use of computers could well lead to a war being waged by mistake.

About one computer specialist in three was prepared to switch employer if his findings were put to socially irresponsible use.

The main lectures, working parties and platform debates at the Munich gathering were attended by up to 500

Süddeutsche Zeitung

people. Two main lines of argument came to light.

The first consisted of worries about the possible repercussions of centralised collection, processing and use of data.

The second was the desire for informatics with a human face, with more attention paid to the wishes of users and operators in the development of programs and workplaces.

Speakers repeatedly sounded a note of self-criticism in respect of the computer buff's pleasure in equipment and programs.

Wolfgang Hesse of the organisation's executive committee mentioned in his opening address the newly-opened head office of a bank that could pride itself on having incorporated the latest technology in the new building.

The bank could indeed be proud of itself, he said, but on a visit to the building he had been handed a plastic card.

Electronic sensors were placed at strategic points all over the building. They automatically registered his card.

As soon as a visitor or member of staff leaves the area for which his card is valid the alarm is sounded, leaving what is left of the erstwhile security staff to investigate.

Hesse not only wondered whether this surveillance technique might not one day be transferred to other sectors of society.

He also noted that the transition from visible to invisible surveillance of people and buildings was an uncanny and worrisome departure.

What long-term consequences, he asked, might it have for society?

Horst Herold, the former head of the *Bundeskriminalamt*, or Federal CID, in Wiesbaden, envisaged data processing as a means of fighting crime much more effectively.

By means of computer analyses, he felt, the police should be able to forecast trends in crime and thus perform a "sanitary" role on society's behalf.

Michael Löwe and Rudolf Wilhelm, from Berlin, members of FIFF's working party on the risks of data processing by the police, said the police no longer had such far-reaching plans yet continued to collect more and more data.

One consequence of this overloading was that simple enquiries, such as for the data of stolen cars, took longer and longer to answer.

The entire system of police data processing, they said, had many shortcomings.

Löwe and Wilhelm also noted that people whose data found their way into police computer files tended to be those who either committed conventional offences or were not very bright.

The police files did not, for instance, list particulars of people who devised new forms of white-collar or computer fraud crime.

Modern techniques thus tended to convey a false impression of criminal trends and would inevitably lead to inaccurate forecasts.

In a platform debate there was heated argument over Bundespost plans for an ISDN, or integrated services digital network, that would provide a digital link between computers.

The proposed system, it was said, could be misused to snoop on users. It automatically stored the telephone numbers of subscribers and users.

[illegible] have been instrumental in devising the concept, admitted that ISDN systems ought not without further ado to be exported to undemocratic countries.

Steffen Wernery of the Chaos Computer Club, Hamburg, preferred technically feasible networks in which central storage of user data was not necessary.

Stephan Wehowsky

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich, 22 October 1987)

The economy

Continued from page 6

businessmen hold back or prefer to look abroad.

Two figures are startling: in the first half of 1987 investment in equipment rose by 3.7 per cent compared with the same period in 1986, investment abroad increased 65.5 per cent.

Little can be expected to help the unemployed from this, from the building industry or public investment. There is not much that can be expected from these quarters to give the sluggish economy a boost.

It seems plausible when Herr Wissmann demands: "Europeans should strengthen domestic economic activity." To this end the five institutes propose once more that tax reforms, scheduled for 1990, should be brought forward a year.

They maintain that what can be done to improve growth conditions should be done as early as possible. A pious hope.

The conclusion Bonn will draw from the autumn report is that the Federal Republic should remain on a course for growth, and that is sufficient.

The Economic Affairs Minister, Martin Bangemann, can confidently pick out all the points that suit him. He is well served.

He can dismiss the proposal of giving priority to tax reforms with a vague reference to "the positive growth effects of consolidating the budget." Unemployment is not mentioned in the statement from Bangemann's ministry.

The conclusion is not new, but once more unsatisfactory. The writers of the autumn report can note that no controversial discussion of substance will take place about its contents. It is not an effective instrument for political guidance.

Even if the institutes' forecasts are wrong, however, something more should be given than a little obligatory applause for a handful of optimistic figures.

Klaus-Peter Schmid

(Die Zeit, Hamburg, 6 November 1987)

Continued from page 7

change situation in the USA and cashed in 14 per cent of the Spiegel stock without having to surrender any voting rights.

The cash is to be used to build new warehouses in the US, but mainly to make additional purchases there.

Michael Otto believes that there is still room for expansion in West Germany, as ever Otto-Versand's main market, primarily in services.

For the past year Otto has operated a furniture removal service and for the past 18 months newly-ordered household electical appliances have been delivered within 48 hours.

The customer service for electrical appliances has been swiftly expanded.

Otto is in the test phase with an insurance project being developed in cooperation with the Gerling Group.

Michael Otto has no worries about the company's future although developments over the past 20 years have gone against the mail-order business.

People have more leisure time, the increase in car ownership has made people more mobile and department stores and the like are more and more concerned with customer requirements.

Nevertheless the mail-order business has expanded — because of low prices, goods are more fashionable, ranges on offer have been expanded and target-group marketing.

Gunhild Freese

(Die Zeit, Hamburg, 23 October 1987)



Survey claims jobs will be made, not lost

The findings of a survey indicate that fears that the main social effect of computerisation will be to make people redundant are groundless.

The survey was carried out for the Bonn Research Ministry at a cost of 4.5 million marks and the results were issued at Systems 87, the Munich computer fair. It shows what industrial executives have long known: that new technologies, far from destroying jobs, create new and better, more highly qualified ones.

Eight economic and social science research institutes spent two years monitoring the introduction of new technologies in manufacturing industry and the service trades.

Their surprising conclusion has been that firms which have made a point of modernising office and administrative systems have also registered the largest number of new jobs.

The banks, for instance, have computerised their operations rapidly in recent years, yet over this period they have increased their payrolls by over 60,000.

This was necessary because customers used the time saved by computer-backed account operations to talk longer with their account managers.

With these findings to strengthen their hand, providing what Nixdorf calls a "social tailwind," computer manufacturers plan to forge ahead with the introduction of computers at work.

Today's offices are nowhere near as up-to-date as they might be, given the range of equipment available.

Office machinery manufacturer Commodore says the personal computer has yet to find its way on to the desks of many secretaries and clerical staff.

In many firms an electric typewriter was still felt to be the acme of modern technology.

Manufacturers are still worried by the attitude of office staff and other employees toward computers and VDUs.

Two out of three West Germans tend to view mother's little (electronic) helper sceptically, and even experienced PC users frequently complain of the physical and mental strain of working at VDUs.

Manufacturers see an easy solution to this problem. Out with the old and in with the new! A new generation of computers is all that is needed.

The new generation is said to be particularly user-friendly. "You don't have to have studied data processing to be able to work with a Macintosh," as Apple say.

Instead of complex commands, *pull-down files clearly guide the user* through the data jungle. Step by step the user and the computer jointly solve the problem. It is usually just a matter of a quick click of the Mouse.

Computer ergonomics is the manufacturers' answer to the physical and mental strain. Modern computers are said to be designed so you can work at them for hours without getting backache or eyestrain.

The latest improvements include keyboards designed by Tulip of Holland to end wear and tear on fingernails and black-and-white monitor screens devised by Nokia of Finland to ease eyestrain.

Six different computers in different categories meet all these requirements and pass their tests with flying colours. All were voted Computer of the Year.

In the home computer category the Commodore Amiga won the accolade. Among MS-DOS computers the new IBM PS/2, Model 39, and the Tandon PAC 286 made the running.

The best 68,000er was the Macintosh II from Apple, the best portable the Compaq Portable III and the best hand-held the Zenith Z 183.

Michael Löhr

(Frankfurter Neue Presse, 22 October 1987)

■ THE ENVIRONMENT

Count Hatzfeldt keeps soldiering on in the forests of the Hexentanzplatz

Five woodland paths converge on a ridge known as the Hexentanzplatz, or Witches' Dance Floor. If the witches really danced and weren't just a figment of popular imagination they could be watched nowadays by an audience of hundreds.

The forest clearing in the Hatzfeldt woods, near Olpe and roughly midway between Cologne and the East German border, tells a tale typical of Germany's stricken forests.

Dense fir trees line one side of the clearing. Fir trees on the other side are yards apart, providing strictly limited cover for young birches, beeches, larches and oaks.

Between the two sections of woodland there is a wide and panoramic "parting" or "bald patch" running right down into the valley.

Count Hatzfeldt, 46, is not given to dramatic gestures. He refers quietly to what, for landowners and nature-lovers, has been a catastrophe.

With a glance in the direction of the clearing, bare and sadly lacking in the mystery that once called witches to mind, he says:

"In five years the entire landscape has undergone a total change. In 1982 this was a dense pine forest extending to the edge of the Hexentanzplatz."

There was no free "cutting" running down to the valley. It takes some imagination to visualise what the clearing, [illegible] woodland, must have looked like.

Compare this vision with the autum 1987 reality and you will have some idea of what has vanished in a mere five years.

Five years ago many people first heard of the phenomenon environmental conservationists dubbed *Waldsterben*, or forest death.

Bonn government officials cautiously referred to "forest damage of a new kind."

The mining industry and coal-fired power stations strongly objected to being blamed for this tree death epidemic and recalled that similar epidemics had occurred in the past.

Previous tree deaths had devastated individual areas, however, whereas the latest epidemic has swept Europe, affected the Old World and the New, and an end is not yet in sight.

The first shock has long passed. The

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

annual reports on forest damage no longer upset public opinion. Ecologically-conscious members of the public are aware of the facts; others don't want to know.

Tree deaths have become part of everyday life and can be simply ignored. The state of the Hatzfeldt forest, south-west of Olpe, will not shock most people out for a walk in the woods.

It has not yet been reduced to the bare bones of needleless trees that point skyward like skeletons. Many walkers may even welcome the view of the surrounding countryside that used to be obscured by the dense woodland.

It seems very much as though they can look forward to even clearer and more panoramic views in the years to come.

The woods are dying quietly and largely unnoticed and unlamented, except by landowners and conservationists.

Many people suspect the warnings sounded by landowners and forestry officials of being mere jawboning by the forest lobby.

They have yet to appreciate that the landowners' struggle for economic survival is a struggle for the survival of all.

Yet the signs are unmistakable. The forest filters toxins from the air and [illegible] their way into the ground water.

Pure water from woodland reservoirs is pumped as a life-giving admixture into recycled and purified river water to improve its quality.

The more toxic substances find their way into the soil, the less effective seepage is as a natural filter, which makes water from the woods progressively poorer in quality.

By the 1990s at the latest, city-dwellers seem sure to face water rationing.

The forest performs another essential task. When the snow melts or there is a heavy downpour it absorbs the water like a sponge. A healthy forest keeps floods at bay.

In the Alps the roots stop scree from working loose and help to prevent landslides and avalanches, but only as long as the woods have a clean bill of health.

So there are sound reasons to lend landowners and forestry officials every assistance and to regard forest rescue operations as a task for the entire community.

The toxin output from factories, coal-fired power stations and motor vehicles must above all be drastically reduced.

This is specified as an essential pre-condition in all debates conducted by forestry and other experts.

What can be done by the man on the spot? Landowner Hatzfeldt trenchantly outlines the dilemma.

In some cases, he says, forestry measures may be able to ease the patient's pain a little, but foresters cannot cure the complaint.

Not even the most capable forester will succeed in either saving existing or planting new woodland.

Unable to effect a cure, he adds on a note of sarcasm, forestry is reduced to the role of a hospice warden, easing the forest's demise.

The experts don't expect pollution to decline to a level at which forestry can be planned over a period of decades until early next century. Today's landowners can't plan their work like their fathers and grandfathers did.

They live in constant fear of storms that can change the shape of the land by tearing holes and driving gaps into the forest.

The wind is thus the arbiter of where the forester has to fell timber and how much he has to sell.

The forest has become unstable and susceptible to the depredations of storms, snowfall and pests such as the bark beetle.

Trees were subjected to these natural strains in the past, but they used to be more resilient and weren't debilitated by toxins such as sulphur dioxide and nitric oxides.

Wind and snow can only lay low a debilitated forest, starting at the edges, and once the edges have been affected, the trees deeper in the woods are more easily ravaged.

In Count Hatzfeldt's woodland, totalling several thousand hectares, gaps constantly occur. It is as though the forest were torn apart by a gigantic hand.

Forester Norbert Saur does his best to save what can be salvaged. He is keen to let nature rejuvenate the forest and allows birch seed, which is wafted in the wind and costs the landowner nothing, to take root in bald spots.

The saplings keep the soil moist and provide shade for spruce, larch, beech, fir and oak trees that grow in their wake.

The birch tree is the roof beneath which the forest of the future takes root and grows.

Saur only fells a few birch trees when their foliage grows so dense that they threaten to impede the growth of other trees that are of greater commercial value.

His objective, however, is to grow a forest as near to natural as possible, a combination — seldom seem in the Federal Republic — of many kinds of trees of all ages.

He hopes the forest renewed in this way will survive until a time when there are fewer toxins in the air and fewer harmful substances are precipitated in the rainfall.

Landowners will likewise need stamina to survive lean years during which earnings from forest products will be meagre.

Their position will be particularly critical in the 1990s when prices will collapse due to a glut of timber on the market.

Count Hatzfeldt is forthrightly critical of fellow-landowners. Many of them, he says, have yet to realise what they stand to lose and are carelessly living on borrowed time.

He feels the catastrophic dynamics of the present trend is beyond the field of vision of both the authorities and those directly affected.

State-owned woodland may be able to recoup losses for decades on end from public funds, but "survival without government aid will be out of the question for private landowners."

Count Hatzfeldt refers to the forest's role as an air and water filter. This, he says, is a public service that has yet to be adequately recompensed by society.

Latest findings in a number of *Länder* may indicate a partial recovery of coniferous woodland, but there are still no signs of effective help for the beleaguered forest.

Statistical ups and downs of a percentage point or two are of no real meaning. A long, hot summer would spell curtains for many trees already badly hit. The dry spell would be the death of them.

There were an unusually large number of beechnuts and acorns this autumn. That is a danger sign. The trees are sick and overproducing seed in a last-ditch bid to save the species.

This "fruit of fear" is a sign that a tree's end is nigh.

The German Forest Protection Society has reprinted in the latest issue of its journal a 1959 essay in which forester Karl Friedrich Wentzel outlined with

Continued on page 13

■ LITERATURE

Reading between the lines for a best-seller

NÜRNBERGER Nachrichten

Many people dream of writing a book and so becoming famous, respected and rich. The path to the achievement of this ambition, however, is tough and full of frustration.

More often than not attempts to write end up in a cul-de-sac. The ambition falls by the wayside and remains a dream.

The first hurdle a potential author has to surmount is the publisher's reader. This implies more than just reading a book. The reader is judge, critic, teacher, manager, jobber and psychiatrist all in one.

In the well-known Hanser Verlag Christoph Buchwald is in charge of the poetry and fiction department. Unsolicited manuscripts from authors all over the place stand in piles on a special desk. His own desk is far too small for the masses of typescripts he receives.

"You could drive a publishing house into bankruptcy if you took on a graduate in German studies to read through all these," Herr Buchwald said. "With some practice you can tell fairly quickly whether a manuscript is good or useless."

More often than not the latter is true. There is a standard letter to the rebuffed author explaining that it is impossible to go into details but the manuscript is rejected, politely but firmly.

"Of course we go through every manuscript. We want to discover a good author. That's how a publishing house makes money," Herr Buchwald said.

But most of the manuscripts that pass through his hands are naive in the extreme. "I am convinced that few of the people who send manuscripts to us actually read books.

"Otherwise the language would not be so poor and full of hackneyed clichés. And the themes are hardly original," he commented.

Nevertheless over the past few years a few writers have managed to escape from the anonymity of the piles of manuscripts and get published.

Another, less well-known, path to a publisher is via a literary agent. This avoids the costly business of hawking a manuscript from door to door. An agent knows where best to try and place a manuscript.

Hanser Verlag, for instance, is not interested in crime novels or children's books. But despite this, Hanser constantly have books sent to them which are of no interest.

The agent must pay considerable attention to the publisher's interests for in this way the successful agent maintains the confidence he has established with the publisher's reader.

Corry Theegarten-Schlotterer operates a literary agency in Munich. She said: "I can only get anywhere with about three per cent of the manuscripts that are sent to me. And of those I select, only about ten per cent eventually are accepted by a publisher."

It goes without saying that she does not make a living from recommending manuscripts to publishers. Her main activity is negotiating rights, in Germany and abroad.

But she does not put aside any manuscript that comes to her. They are all read.

To keep down the daily flood of manuscripts that come to her she engages outside readers, who write reports on manuscripts.

She said: "Most people who write are too involved with themselves." Writing is for them a kind of therapy, the storyline inevitably dull.

"I get a lot of private memoirs from pensioners who have time to write. The worst is that they invariably go to such great lengths to explain just why what they did at any given time was right."

Corry Theegarten-Schlotterer says the trouble with young authors down to the rashness with which they go about writing. "They often have original ideas, but they want to be published straightaway," she said.

"As a writer one has to be self-critical and rewrite and rewrite again and again before submitting a manuscript."

Erich Rössler, non-fiction reader and copy editor at Bertelsmann Verlag, has little to do with young writers. He explained that this was because one had to work more patiently on a non-fiction work than on a novel or poem, writing from a special viewpoint where an imaginary world is important.

Rössler has been at Bertelsmann for 16 years and in all this time he has only once accepted an unsolicited manuscript.

He said that he had never had the experience of discovering a writer out of the blue. "Writers do not seem to know what has already appeared in their subjects."

But a reader does have odd experiences in the non-fiction sector. Erich Rössler has any number of people among his "clients," out to improve the world.

There were two authors who believed they could refute Einstein's theory of relativity. In cases such as this Rössler, a historian by training, could see that there was nothing in the manuscript, but, he said, "I send books on themes such as this to an expert in physics or the sciences, presupposing that I could see that there was something in it somewhere."

A ticklish point for publishers' readers at the moment is poetry. Public interest in poetry has fallen enormously, so it is essential to look for manuscripts with a specific goal.

Sybille Terrahe of Goldmann Verlag said: "Most of the stuff that lands on my desk is gushing kitsch."

When, for instance, the rose for a beloved is mentioned, then she knows that the poem is suitable for a poetry album, not for a book.

She explained that trend lyrics were currently in demand. "That means coming to terms with the tone of the times without trying to butter anything up."

Although over the past two years work of a high quality has been published by Goldmann, discriminating liturature is more the exception than the rule in the Goldmann list. It is difficult for a publishing house to change its image.

Every month 45 paperbacks appear with the Goldmann imprint, a considerable pile of light literature. It is hard to do careful editing for so many publications.


The naive piled upon the hackneyed... Hanser Verlag's Buchwald. (Photo: PKi)

This is the reason why Sybille Terrahe proposes to leave Goldmann and become a self-employed publisher's reader. She said: "I shall not have so much influence then, but I shall be able to sit down with an author and work on a manuscript."

Inevitably one asks publishers' readers and copy editors who go to such pains in the cause of good literature: if they know so much better why don't they write themselves?

Christoph Buchwald explained this: "I could [illegible]

Continued on page 11

It's always time to tell a fairy-tale

Once upon a time there was a princess who was pricked by a golden spinning wheel and slept for one hundred years — until a handsome prince appeared, kissed her and the magic spell was lifted from the king's daughter and the kingdom.

Everyone knows the fairy-tale of *Frau Holle*, in which a girl steps into a fountain and so passes into another time-world.

Almost everyone knows the tale of the Monk of Heisterbach, who did not believe that before God a thousand years were but a day.

Time plays an important part in all these fairy-stories. It is not time that is strictly measured in terms of seconds and minutes, however, although even in fairy-tales the clock tower strikes twelve and a gateway closes for ever at midnight.

In fairy-stories time is the right moment when the right decision must be made, when fate can be determined.

Time in fairy-stories is a fascinating and many-sided theme. The European Fairy-Tale Society, which met this year in Gelsenkirchen, concentrated on this theme.

The question of time in fairy-tales was the subject of lectures and was a theme considered and analysed from many sides.

Otto Betz, until a few years ago a theology lecturer in Hamburg, said in his address, which opened the congress, that fairy-stories, with their language rich in imagery, reflected the experiences and problems of mankind.

One of the lessons learned is to grab every opportunity by the hairs, not waste time, use it correctly.

The apparent contradiction in the presentation of time in fairy-tales is in fact a proof that time is relative. The tellers of fairy-tales knew this long before Einstein — a princess sleeps for a hundred years and for the Brothers Grimm three years are like three days for the drummer-boy.

Historian Horst Wenzel showed in his lecture how historical time had changed the sense of time towards the end of the Middle Ages.

In the late Middle Ages quite different elements emerged in fairy-tales, reflecting society. In the earlier tales the knight and knightly valour, fairies and magic swords played an important role. They were not included later.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages merchants came into their own. They moved about Europe and divided the year into new sections. They were in the main under pressure of time.

It is not surprising then that in the fairy-tales from *Fortunatus*, one of the hero's wishes to go forward faster to overcome the limits of time and space.

As fairy-tales have their own reality time can work according to its own laws, a hundred years can pass by like a day — or as in Indian tales twelve years can pass in a world of irreality in less than 30 minutes in human time.

Lonely giants in Celtic tales hear the singing of fairies and forget time in a flash, they remain for years in the land of fairies and believe they only dream for seconds.

Dorothee Sölle spoke of "time forgotten and time-consciousness." This, she said, was one of the most important elements in fairy-tales.

She insisted that nothing takes place in fairy-tales that is accidental, that forgetting time is used for dramatic purposes, to make clear the stupidity of earth people, their inclination to a life of luxury and affluence, forgetful of their promises and good intentions.

Recollection, for example, of a wife, deserted and then forgotten, is a symbol of maturity, of a growth in a sense of responsibility.

If time in all its possible variations in fairy-stories has a vital function, death is ignored. Most fairy-tales end with "they lived happily ever after," that means the end of danger, violence and transitoriness.

Death happens in fairy tales mainly in an indirect manner, seldom as in fairy-stories about "Old Father Time" as a character.

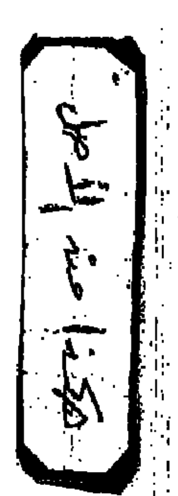
There are stories, Celtic and early German tales mainly, in which the journey into the kingdom of death symbolises a new life in which the hero acquires new magical powers.

Fairy-tales contradict the thought of death and should give encouragement to life. As many experts and story-tellers say time and time again fairy-tales can be a real help in life.

Evil is not trivialised, "things have a way of working themselves out" and the evil-doer sooner or later comes to a sticky end. The fairy-tale is still very much alive today, and as essential as ever.

Richard Alexander

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 8 October 1987)



■ CULTURAL RELATIONS

Heinrich Heine is alive and well and living in China

The number of press reports on new literature on Heine appearing from Chinese publishing houses is evidence that Heinrich Heine is, in China, the most beloved and well known western author.

A recent international Heine symposium at Peking University showed how well the Chinese know their Heine, whom they have taken to their own.

Professor Joseph A. Kruse, head of the Heinrich Heine Institute and director of the Heine Society, both of Dusseldorf, took part in the symposium.

He was accompanied by Dr Volkmar Hansen, editor of a complete edition of Heine's works.

Contacts were made with Peking University and the newly-established world literature research centre, attached to the university, at the end of the 1970s via Professor Zhang Yushu, a Heine translator and publisher, and head of the research centre.

Professor Zhang visited the Heine Institute then and expressed the wish to work together with the Heine Society.

Apart from the Heine experts from Düsseldorf, there were 11 other Heine specialists from West Germany, East Germany, Japan and from the North American Heine Society, exchanging ideas with 40 Chinese graduates of German studies.

The Chinese hosts said that academics from China's frontier regions and even from Inner Mongolia had travelled to [illegible] sary of the German poet's birth.

There were 33 lectures given at the symposium in German, English and Chinese. These lectures, and reports on subsequent discussions, are to be published eventually in Chinese by Peking University.

The lectures showed just how much the various scholars had in common as well as many national differences in approach and in an ideological understanding of Heine's works.

The foreigners present at the symposium, such as Professor Robert Holub from Berkeley, USA, were amazed and to some extent share-faced, that the Chinese experts spoke of Heine as a living, contemporary personality. The philologists from the West were more concerned with the poet's historical dimensions.

In the ten years of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 literature was under suspicion and suppressed, but interest in literature not only seems to have grown stronger during this period but it was grabbed as an essential for life.

Heine's poetry and prose is interpreted by the Chinese as an expression of their own early history and personal circumstances.

Feng Zhi, doyen of Chinese Germanists and a respected poet himself, gave the opening address at the symposium before an audience including the heads of Peking University, the West and East German ambassadors, two important representatives of contemporary Chinese literature and other participants in the symposium.

[illegible] terature specialist from Wuhan drew some thought-provoking parallels between Feng Zhi and Heine.

The lectures showed there was fertile ground for an exchange of ideas between the various academics.

The contributions to the symposium dealt with Heine's works as a whole. Certain aspects were singled out from his work and biography. Undeveloped territory was conquered by the inclusion, at the request of the Chinese, of the *Pictures of Travel* and Heine's novelistic prose.

The lectures also covered in detail Heine's relations with Börne, Rahel Varnhagen, George Sand and Germaine de Stael and gave various outlines of the historical panorama of Heine's times, particularly romanticism that is a subject for much controversial discussion in China.

Presentations of Heine's influence in West Germany, North and Latin America rounded off the Japanese and Chinese contributions to considerations of Heine's work as a whole.

Heine's later poetry dealing with his Düsseldorf memories on the death of a school friend were the starting point for an intimate and exhaustive presentation of the position of Heine today for writer and publisher's reader Friedemann Berger from Leipzig.

A special edition of the Peking University newspaper included a contribution on Heine in China in the past, present and for the future.

There was an excellent evening concert in the University of Heine's works set to music by Schubert and Schumann.

One of the Chinese symposium coordinators recommended his country to the foreign guests as "the distant land of the lotus blossom." Poetry lovers in China have long been acquainted with Heine's exotic as well as his romantic-German verse.

His political prose and his mock-epic [illegible] are much appreciated in China because of their discriminating finesse.

(Rheinische Post, Düsseldorf, 24 October 1987)

Goethe Institute opens doors in Peking

West Germany is to be the first western country to open a cultural institute in Peking.

An agreement has been signed provisionally in Peking by the head of the cultural affairs department at the Foreign Ministry, Barthold Witte, and the deputy secretary-general of the Chinese state education committee, Li Jian, for the establishment of a Goethe Institute in China.

After two days of negotiations a 40-page cultural exchange programme covering 1988 and 1989 was also signed, and a television studio delivered by West Germany was handed over.

The studio, costing DM6m, is part of a Goethe Institute and Internationes project to screen a 26-part German-language course in China from the middle of 1989.

Negotiations for the establishment of a Goeth Institute in China have been underway [illegible] trich Genscher visited China in the autumn of 1985.

Problems in the project arose because China's centralised education system regarded the introduction of an independent, foreign institution as a foreign body.

The French, British and Americans have for years been trying to set up similar cultural institutions in China.

The present agreement, only initialled, is expected to be given full approval very shortly. It is regarded as a pilot project and as a step towards opening up the Chinese educational system.

The negotiations on the rights of a Goethe Institute, originally regarded by Peking as just a language institute, produced a compromise formula after Chancellor Helmut Kohl, during his visit to Peking in July last year, was able to interest Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the project. The Goethe Institute's partner in China will be the state education commission. During the initial three years the Institute will be housed in Peking's Foreign Language College.

The Goethe Institute as a central institute for the promotion of the German language will be open to all Chinese German-studies gradutes and will concentrate on regional studies.

All the agreements signed in Peking in- [illegible]

Until now there has only been one Goethe Institute in the East Bloc countries, in Romania. Negotiations with Hungary have been concluded and they are still under way with Poland and Bulgaria.

The make-up of the Goethe Institute in Peking is something new — it will have a German director and two deputy directors, one of whom will almost certainly be Chinese.

There will be an institute advisory council made up equally of Germans and Chinese that will have to be unanimous in any suggestions it makes.

The new cultural exchange programme, much expanded, is now supported by more than a dozen university and technical college partnerships. In the programme there is also agreement on an increase in grants.

Latest figures show that at present there are about 3,000 Chinese in the Federal Republic, 2,000 students and 1,000 scientists and technicians.

Every effort is to be made to increase the number of those studying and scientists in exchange programmes to 3,000.

West German funds are to be provided in 1988 for an extra 130 grants, including 50 in the grant programme from German industry.

Separate agreements have been made for increases in 1989. West German now comes after the USA as the most important provider of grants to Chinese.

First steps have been made for an exchange of schoolboys and girls. In general there is to be an increase in exchanges involving young people.

All six of West Germany's major foundations have grant programmes and development projects in China.

The cultural agreement includes plans for an exhibition of expressionist paintings from the Buchheim Collection in 1989 and a display of "Drawings from the Sixties."

China will put on two exhibitions, "Yi-Xing Ceramics" and Chinese folk art. The Hamburg Staatsoper and the Munich Chamber Orchestra are to make guest appearances in China.

Agreements have been made for an exchange of dancers and dance directors in modern dance (Cologne's Dance Forum) and for cooperation in taking up Carl Orff's system for teaching music in schools.

Other activities include the support of translation projects in both languages.

Johnny Erling

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 12 October 1987)

Bestsellers

Continued from page 10

pair it so that it goes." And publishers' readers also make mistakes. Erich Rössler once rejected a book that was being developed because the outline was written in incomprehensible sociological jargon.

The book, by the well-known women's libber Alice Schwarzer, appeared under another imprint and was a best-seller.

He said that the language had been simplified from what had been used in the outline he had seen.

After all has been done for the love of literature, the basic facts of the matter are that books are published with the firm's balance sheet firmly in mind.

Christoph Buchwald said: "Booksellers will not purchase from our representatives books by more than two unknown young authors per season."

He is of the view that if more are published that is being irresponsible. "You are not doing the author a favour. His book is a flop."

Klaus Roehler of Luchterhand-Verlag spoke about the profession of publisher's reader from the economics of printing viewpoint.

He said: "A publisher's reader is someone who puts up with being poorly paid, has to work many hours overtime and has no chances of promotion. If he doesn't get out he'll be a publisher's reader all his life."

He continued: "There is no such thing as a senior publisher's reader. The chief reader is the publisher himself. Nowadays more often than not that means the publisher's managing director, the man who signs contracts with authors and who goes to his grave with the notion that a publisher's reader might know something about literature but nothing about the economics of publishing."

Small publishing houses, that do not have the safety net of famous authors and best-sellers in their list, have to perform a much more perilous tight-rope act.

Explaining how she manages to survive, Antje Kunstmann of Frauenbuch and Weismann Verlag said: "We don't have an expensive administrative machine as do the large publishing houses."

"We can look out for our titles at less cost, more spontaneously. Sometimes we say: let's give this book a whirl."

The proof of the pudding is in the eating and this method has paid off, for Weismann and Frauenbuch publications sell well.

The publishing house also regularly discovers writers who attract the attention in the critical pages of the heavy newspapers.

She said: "No small publishing house can survive without a lot of personal involvement and some beating of one's own drum."

It is a mistake, however, to think that because small publishing houses are more prepared to take a risk they will automatically take up an unsolicited manuscript.

Antje Kunstmann has the same difficulties as other publishers' readers.

Top quality writing is never to be found among typescripts just sent in. Her publishing house recruits its authors more often than not from the literary magazines, from the reading and recommendations of other writers.

Christoph Buchwald has no time for the myth of the unrecognised genius. He said: "We are all too keen on getting good authors."

Emil B. Brodski

(Nürnberger Nachrichten, 24 October 1987)

■ EDUCATION

Teaching slowly declining in public esteem

About 300 teachers spent two days in Osnabrück discussing why their profession has slowly but surely declined in public esteem.

The conference was the brainchild of Georg-Berndt Oschatz, former Education Minister of Lower Saxony, who must have felt, in a moment of philosophical reflection, it couldn't be right for teachers to be held in such low repute.

How low? A teacher from the Bremen area exhibited in Osnabrück a small but select assortment of mementoes of a teacher's life at the turn of the century.

Those were the days, today's teachers may feel, when the profession enjoyed respect.

They were the days when a portrait of the Kaiser gazed sternly from the wall and the master gazed no less sternly down at boys three to a desk, with a red-hot coal-fired stove in one corner.

They were also days when jokes were cracked that survive to this day, including four lines of doggerel verse about teachers not working all that hard.

[The English verse that best conveys the idea scribbled on a turn-of-the-century German blackboard is the following, by Hilaire Belloc, about a spendthrift son who bankrupts his parents and ends up as "something in the City":

Even now at 25,
he has to work to keep alive.
All day long from 10 to 4,
for half the year or even more.
With but an hour or two to spend
at luncheon with a City friend.]

As all Germans know, compulsory schooling ends at lunchtime. So they can only be sure that teachers work half the day, if that! And those holidays!

There could hardly be a more striking contradiction between the fact that parents entrust their nearest and dearest, the children, to the teaching profession for half the day and the equally undeniable fact that they aren't much impressed by teachers in general.

Parents may no longer see teachers as Prussian NCOs who have merely exchanged the parade ground for the classroom.

They may no longer be afraid that teachers are members of the loony Left intent on drip-feeding their children the poison of revolutionary cant.

Yet the social standing of the profession inexorably continues to decline.

In the early 1960s the Allensbach market research organisation started to ask Germans how they rated primary and secondary school teachers, since when their kudos has taken one clobbering after another.

They used to be at the head of the list, where teaching was felt to rank alongside doctors, university lecturers and clergymen.

They have now plummeted to about 20th place, marginally ahead of journalists and opera singers.

Widespread prejudice against the teaching profession is reflected in the adages: "There are three reasons for becoming a teacher: the Christmas holidays, the Easter holidays and the summer holidays" and "Born, became a teacher, went on holiday, died."

When TV interviewers asked people in the street how they felt about the claim, made by most teachers' associations, that the profession worked too hard and too long, the camera team said most people burst out laughing, shook their heads in disbelief and were generally amazed.

Why, delegates wondered in Osnabrück, was teaching, of all professions, so profoundly misunderstood?

"School is sick," said a headmaster, "and it makes staff sick too." His school had 110 per cent of its staff quota, yet some lessons still went unsupervised.

A trade union official echoed his sentiment, saying: "We have the choice of either working less, in default of duty, or dutifully working our way toward a heart attack."

Teaching is work that takes place in public to a greater extent than almost any other, yet much of the really back-breaking work goes unnoticed by the public.

"All that people see," said a Hanover senior school teacher, "is when I mow my lawn from 3 to 5 p.m. They don't see me marking exercise books from 5 p.m. till midnight."

Viennese educationalist Professor Marian Heitger tried to alleviate the general tenor of gloom by means of a didactical trick. He tried provocation.

"When teachers start talking about themselves," he told the conference, "we are well advised to think in terms of a lament."

His advice, surprisingly simple, was for them to take the issues seriously, but not themselves.

This wigging seemed to work. The conference went on to concentrate on a level-headed analysis of the teacher's status in society rather than on tear-stained contemplation of themselves.

The depressing conclusion they reached was that teaching had become a closed shop. For the first time in their history, access to staff common rooms at German schools is almost barred.

In all *Länder* the intake of young teachers is such a trickle as to be almost negligible, and there is little prospect of change as long as numbers of children decline and public funds are in short supply.

The alarming idea of a teaching profession that is steadily growing older is far from an exaggeration. By the end of the century a generation of 60-year-olds will be preparing German youngsters for life.

How can an entire profession retain its self-esteem when it is prevented, for whatever reasons, from taking part in the general trend toward shorter working hours?

How can it maintain its self-respect when intellectual rejuvenation is virtually ruled out because recruitment of young teachers is reduced to a trickle?

How can it sustain its sense of its own worth when students who set their hearts and minds on qualifying as teachers are dismissed as fools (because they stand little or no chance of getting a job)?

The conference would not have been true to type if the teachers had not tried to take an academic look at the entire issue, which they did, with the inevitable consequences.

They promptly disagreed on what needed changing first: man or his social conditions.

The trade union wing reiterated its demands: shorter working hours, smaller classes. Working conditions would then improve automatically.

Ministry officials promptly replied that teachers, as civil servants, must be expected to work 100-per-cent. They made such a lasting impression on pupils that they must be expected to set an example.

The teachers then argued that it was frustrating for both them and their pupils to have to knowingly prepare a substantial number of the young people taught for unemployment once they left school.

From this point on the arguments went round in circles. Ought society not to be first changed? Or, more precisely, must it be changed?

In the end Wolfgang Knies, the present Education Minister of Lower Saxony, said he had been shaken to learn how great a sense of responsibility and social commitment teachers felt:

"I was shocked and worried when I realised just how much teachers are expected to do."

Yet he risked no attempt to say how a valve might be opened to relieve pressure on the profession.

In terms of mass psychology, he said, the public behaved toward teachers in much the same way as they regarded a bad coffee bean:

"If one bean is rotten and stinks, the foul smell will pollute the entire jar."

What was more, those who aimed at a critical appraisal of school and sought to arrive at judgments of their own must resist the temptation to see through rose-tinted spectacles the "good old days" when the teacher was said to have been a pillar and paragon of society.

Reinhard Urschel

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 31 October 1987)

Thrown in at the deep end in America

French educationalist and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau noted in the 18th century the importance of foreign travel for initiation.

Like his *Emile*, many German exchange students and assistants spend time at universities abroad.

They there not only see and compare how others live — in terms of politics, society and the arts — but learn the ways of a new world and new ways far from home.

"What I liked best was being allowed to teach without supervision, being simply thrown in at the deep end and on my own in charge of a class," says Monika Anna, a Saarbrücken University student of English literature.

She spent a year at the University of Maryland, near Washington, D.C., teaching young American students German.

"I wouldn't have been allowed to do so in Germany without full academic qualifications," she says. Even as a *probationary teacher she* would, at least initially, have been under constant supervision.

Yet in Maryland she had been given a single test, then left to her own devices in charge of a class of students not much younger than herself.

Despite initial stage-fright the freedom, independence and self-reliance that came with the new world made her stay in America an invaluable experience.

Marcella Hölz from Tübingen says she too taught her own class as an assistant at McMaster University in Canada.

Once a week she and the other assistants had conferred with the head of department on their progress and the course.

"But I was able to interpret the guidelines as I saw fit in my own course," she says.

At these weekly meetings the subjects discussed included how to react if, for instance, one student was insolent or another fell asleep.

Monika and Marcella had to mark their students' essays and tests, which required a great deal of tact.

"Many assistants had ideas of strict German standards," Monika says. She tried to adjust to the more easy-going outlook of her host country.

Marcella had to do 10 hours work a week, including preparation. "But marking work at times took even longer," she says.

She was paid $750 a month by McMaster and exempted from paying *student dues, which was a considerable* bonus.

Student dues are high and assistants are usually expected to study as well as teach. Marcella was also offered a scholarship to enable her to travel during the summer months.

Both she and Monika crossed the Atlantic as part of exchange schemes between their respective universities.

Mathilde Friedrich of the foreign relations department at Saarbrücken University says these exchange facilities are initially based on informal contacts. "After a while," she says, "an attempt is made to formalise them by means of a contractual agreement."

Professor William Slater of McMaster University says: "It is easy to launch a programme of this kind and hard to keep it going."

He mentions bureaucratic problems and financial considerations, while admitting that interest in exchange schemes is definitely on the increase.

"We receive many enquiries from America whether we might be interested in cooperation," Frau Friedrich says.

She attributes this growth in interest to the internationalisation of the academic world and to people with overseas experience standing a better chance of promotion in America.

After her year in Maryland Monika Anna felt sufficiently qualified to apply for a job in adult education. She now teaches German for foreigners.

"Before going to America I wouldn't have known how to explain to a foreigner the difference in German between the accusative and the dative cases," she says.

Most assistants who work in America teach German. Only a minority teach other subjects.

Tübingen student Achim Schaarschmidt is working as a tutor with first-semester physics students at McMaster University. He is also working on a cancer research programme.

He too hopes his work in Canada will be seen as an additional qualification when he applies for a job back home in Germany.

"Everyone knows what the job situation is for student teachers in Germany," Marcella says. She hopes her job experience in Canada will help her to find a full-time job at a private school back home.

Achim has even been asked to stay on in Canada and publish his research findings, but after a year abroad he is keen to return home.

He owns up to feeling homesick and says the letters from home are fewer and

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■ LIVING

It's sunshine all day and night down at the pub

Do you mean to say it all comes from the roof?" a customer asks the landlord as he replenishes her quarter litre of Baden wine? "Oh yes," says mine host Bruno Linder. And he doesn't mean the wine.

His chalet bar not far from Freiburg, the Rappenecker Hütte, is a favourite with Black Forest hikers.

He and his guests don't just talk about the weather or the scenery. The chalet is *run* entirely on electricity generated by solar panels on the roof. The 300-year-old farm 1,000 metres up in the hills is a pilot project, the first building of its kind run solely on solar power.

Herr Linder and his family have been proud tenants of a sun-run home since the beginning of July, when the solar power system, devised and installed by the Fraunhofer Solar Energy Systems Institute, Freiburg, was inaugurated at a ceremony attended by leading politicians.

This summer was unpredictable, to put it mildly, so the first few months have been an exacting test.

Does the solar generator produce enough power when the Sun does not shine as brightly as it should in a wine-growing area?

The first two months proved the point. It does. Throughout this period the red light on the control panel never switched on (which would have meant the diesel generator was in use).

The diesel generator is at the ready, for safety's sake, to make sure electric power is available in poor weather when the solar power is not enough.

Bruno Linder for one, not having had to switch over to the diesel, is satisfied with the performance of his solar power system.

He came by it more by coincidence than by design. Until 1985 the Rappenecker Hütte was a typical Black Forest hill farm. No electricity, just candles and oil lamps.

Then the farmer and his wife, a couple from Oberried, down in the valley, decided to convert the old farm into a bar.

The Freiburg solar research scientists worked out that conversion to solar panels and photovoltaic equipment would cost only half the price of laying in mains electricity.

Baden-Württemberg, the Bonn government and the European Community were prepared to foot most of the bill for what was to be a pilot project, so the cost was further reduced.

Herr Linder says that exact accounts of the outlay from various sources of finance have yet to be drawn up. All he can say is that it took 800 hours of work.

A more important point than the exact cost of this particular project is the Fraunhofer Society's estimate that similar facilities, industrially manufactured, would cost between DM60,000 and DM80,000 to install.

Herr Linder is not quite right in saying it all comes from the roof. His electric power comes from the Sun.

Its energy is absorbed by 40 square metres of solar panels on the south-facing roof and converted into electric power by a system of regulators, batteries and inverters.

The Fraunhofer Institute says the Rappenecker Hütte has the first solar power system in Germany that runs entirely on alternating current (hence the inverter).

Solar power is either converted straight from CD into AC or stored in 54 batteries in a spare room for use in an emergency.

The solar power supply, 220 volts of alternating current, runs every item of electrical equipment in the household.

Electric power is not used indiscriminately, however. Sophisticated energy-saving arrangements are an essential part of the project.

All equipment was selected for low energy consumption, and special circuit-breakers were installed to prevent a breakdown caused by too many devices being used simultaneously.

No matter how much care is taken, someone might inadvertently switch on the freezer at the same time as the dishwasher is running. If this happens, one of the two will automatically be switched off. Load-shedding, they call it.

Herr Linder says the system requires new thinking. You can't just switch on any device whenever the fancy takes you. "It has to be organised."

The power supply is sufficient to run the washing machine even when it is raining, but the family makes a point of whenever possible doing the washing when the Sun is shining.

You need to develop power management to a fine art, he says. The system won't work unless you pay a certain amount of attention to detail.

There have been no maintenance problems yet. That is because the keen young project engineers from Freiburg call round every week to ensure that the system is in perfect working order.

They check and rearrange equipment, compile and evaluate data, and the Fraunhofer Society hopes the Rappenecker Hütte will be landmark in solar energy development.

The Sun, they say, is the only inexhaustible source of energy. It is also environmentally sound.

Bruno Linder sees it in even simpler terms. "The electricity is free," he says. No more electricity bills!

Karl-Otto Sattler

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 22 October 1987)

Everyone's in a ferment over the solar-powered Rappenecker Hütte wine bar in the Black Forest. (Photo: Rita Weber)

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further between. He is clearly caught between career prospects and the desire to get back home.

Monika recalls that the knowledge of sheer geographical distance weighed heavily on her during her first stay in the United States.

She says would-be teaching assistants at North American universities would do well to be mentally stable and able to withstand the change.

They must also speak good English. They will often be teaching first semesters with no prior knowledge of German.

Above all, they must enjoy teaching and be keen to try out anything new — and to do so frankly and without hesitation.

Irene Gammel

(Saarbrücker Zeitung, 22 October 1987)

Dying forests

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amazing foresight the link between vehicle emission and tree death.

"Woods and trees," he wrote nearly 30 years ago, "can only exercise to the full the curative properties they are known to possess if atmospheric pollution is kept within bounds, allowing the sensitive biological unit we call the forest to survive."

He readily conceded that industrial would face technical and economic difficulties if it had to retain smoke and dust.

He added, on a note of pathos but in a manner entirely appropriate to the situation, that: "We feel, in keeping with responsible industrial executives, that still more must be done."

A later generation of foresters, such as Count Hatzfeldt, still await a change for the better.

Asked whether he felt there was any point in his work when atmospheric pollution continued to increase, he says: "I don't feel it's all in vain."

He stops for breath, shrugs his shoulders and adds: "So I will simply soldier on."

Michael Brandt

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, Cologne, 27 October 1987)

■ HORIZONS

Pressure increases on the army to accept women

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

We don't want young bunnies whose bottoms you can pinch, but self-confident women with equal rights in the army," said Regina Senft.

Frau Senft, carefully made-up, is 30, the mother of two daughters and self-appointed spokeswoman for German girls who are putting pressure on the Bundeswehr, the German armed forces.

In Bonn she has set in motion a women in the armed forces campaign as part of which she hurries from one discussion to another.

She represents girls and women who want to storm the last bastion of male domination, the armed forces — but by peaceful means.

Frau Senft is certainly no gunwoman, but she has decided to scale the heights of the Defence Ministry at Hardthöhe, not for herself, but for the others.

She demands that women should be allowed to serve in uniform, but unarmed. In this she is supported by the Free Democrats.

The FDP party conference in Kiel voiced support for women in the armed forces on equal terms with men, including the carrying of weapons. For this to be introduced there would have to be an amendment to Basic Law, the 1949 Bonn constitution. Renate Schmidt, deputy chairwoman of the SPD parliamentary party, said at a discussion held by the SPD-oriented Friedrich Ebert Foundation:

"The armed forces are not the usual kind of employer. In serious situations it would mean that women would have to kill."

But Regina Senft is convinced that she can push women, unarmed, to the foremost ranks of the army.

She points out that the Warsaw Pact countries and Nato states include 250,000 women in their armed forces.

Her campaign is also supported by the results of surveys in the Federal Republic which have shown that 58 per cent of the population, and 56 per cent of women, believe that women should no longer waive the right to volunteer to serve as soldiers.

Women have the same chance as men for promotion in the Bundeswehr's medical service. There are 158 women serving as professionals in the Army and five female doctors have reached the rank of colonel. The others serve in lower commissioned ranks.

But the Defence Ministry let it be known that there were no plans in the offing to extend the employment of women in the armed forces.

However, Frau Senft has not been put off by this. She said: "Women can serve as pilots in jets and helicopters without having to change Basic Law. There are 30 women in the Federal Border Police being trained in the use of weapons."

If it comes to it two women, supported by Frau Senft, will take a test case on their right to admittance into the Bundeswehr to the administrative court in Cologne.

However Frau Senft fears that the army would not touch with a barge pole a woman who went to court over the issue.

She has made an in-depth study of what is needed to admit women into army barracks. Only in this way can the errors be avoided that occurred when the first female recruits joined the Belgian Army.

Ingrid Baeck, 27, was one of the eight women who enlisted in the Belgian Army in 1978. She is now a first lieutenant and press officer for the 1st Corps of the Belgian armed forces stationed at Junkersdorf, near Cologne.

"We were the guinea-pigs. Fundamentally our superiors had no idea how they should deal with us. Some were paternal, others showed us what's what," she recalls.

Her blonde hair is crew cut which is more practical when she is on manoeuvres.

Her training lasted five years. The first months of basic training were the worst — crawling about in mud, on the run until she dropped, obstacle courses, hurling anti-tank grenades, laying mines and firing with automatic weapons.

She said that, unlike the men, they were pushed to the limits of their endurance.

There was annoyance about accommodation for, unlike the men, they were not put into dormitories but were given rooms with two beds and a shower.

Ingrid Baeck regarded this as "an un-

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Wants to run in the New York marathon . . . Barbara Bergkemper-Marks. (Photo:)

New police chief is 36 years old and pregnant

Barbara Bergkemper-Marks is the first woman to be appointed a police chief in West Germany.

After leave for pregnancy (she expects a child this month) she will take up her appointment in Leverkusen, North Rhine-Westphalia, early in 1988.

Frau Bergkemper-Marks, 36, has been tops in most of the jobs she has held in the ten years she has worked in government; she is currently a ministerial director in the state's Education Ministry.

"[illegible] woman in most of the appointments I have held," she said.

She is an unusual civil servant in every way, keen on sport with an ambition to run in the New York marathon. She sometimes jogs 30 kilometres. She is also keen on visiting museums and reading.

After graduating in law at Cologne University she was the first female lawyer to work in the office of the chairman of the Regional Council in Cologne. She was 26.

She says that one of her colleagues at that time complained that the civil service was taking on "teenagers."

Five years later she was the first female member of the main committee of the SPD state parliamentary party.

She was then transferred to the Education Ministry where, since 1985, she has headed the department dealing with the affairs of the education ministers conference and the Bundesrat (the Upper House in the Bundestag).

A short while ago the North Rhine-Westphalian Interior Minister Herbert Schnoor, whose leadership she admires sounded her out for the job in Leverkusen, Frau Bergkemper-Marks said.

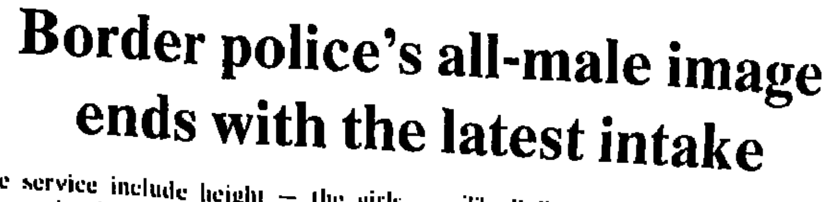
Prime Minister Johannes Rau mentioned that she had been appointed in a throw-away remark in a state parliament debate. She regards herself as liberal and is convinced that she will be able to get on with the men at police headquarters in Leverkusen.

She says with self-confidence but not arrogance that it is a matter of making right decisions. She believes that the most important factor is to offer sound leadership and be fair.

She does not regard herself as a career woman and has no major ambitions. Much that has happened to her has been "luck," she said. But she does have one promising attitude. "I am simply delighted over every dramatic job change."

dpa

(Nordwest Zeitung, Oldenburg, 22 October 1987)



Border police's all-male image ends with the latest intake

The first 31 women have started their service with the Federal Border Police (BGS).

Their company leader and instructor, Wolfgang Sommerer, welcomed the girls, aged between 17 and 20, to the training unit at Swisttal-Heimerzheim, near Bonn, with a witty speech about "this historic moment" that was aimed at putting them at ease.

For the first time since the Border Police was set up in 1952, the 31 girl candidates are to be trained alongside 123 male Border Police cadets.

After being welcomed into the service they were taken to the clothing stores to be fitted out.

About 1,000 young women applied when it was decided to open up the BGS to the fair sex. The short list was made up of 120 women. They had to take an induction test and then be examined thoroughly.

The candidates were drawn from Flensburg in the north to Lake Constance in the south.

The training for police service with the new women's corps of the BGS lasts thirty months and ends with an examination. The training comes to an end after an 18-month probation period.

The women will be instructed in theory and practice, just like the men, and trained in the use of weapons.

The only distinction is that the six to seven hours of obligatory sport per week will be "assessed on the basis of women's standards," according to Sommerer.

Candidates for the service must have the equivalent to British O-levels, but 12 of the 31 in the first intake have the *Abitur*, the university entrance examination.

Other conditions for being taken into the service include height — the girls cannot be shorter than 1.65 metres.

The women will later serve in Border Police patrol units. In times of defence there is no question of them being engaged in combat units.

According to the regulations governing the BGS only special units can go on active service in defence of the Federal Republic.

The West German Police Federation has welcomed the 31 women into the Federal Border Police, but has again called for the abolition of any military role for the Border Police.

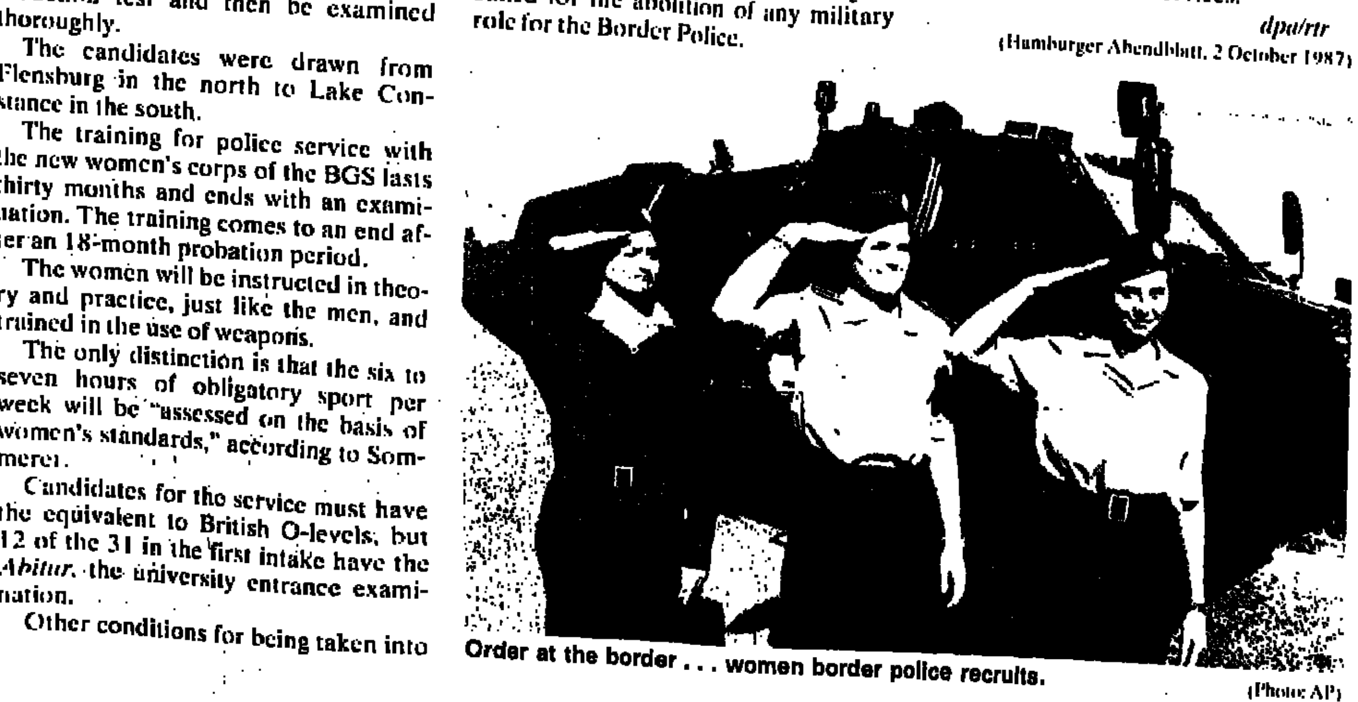
The Police Federation explained that it would be contrary to Basic Law if women were put into active service with weapons.

The induction of the 31 women into the BGS now raises the question whether the ban on women serving in the armed forces should be put aside.

If legislators regard the Federal Border Police as a "national police force" then the Interior Ministry will be obliged to think again on the question of women in the armed services.

dpa/rtr

(Hamburger Abendblatt, 2 October 1987)



Order at the border . . . women border police recruits. (Photo: AP)

■ FRONTIERS

Youth hostels become more like hotels as the dormitory images fades

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

West Germany has 557 youth hostels with a total of 71,816 beds, but the Cologne youth hostel at Riehl, on the banks of the Rhine, is perhaps the most comfortable and the most relaxed in the country.

Sixteen-year-old Katja from Soltau in North Germany complained that she could not smoke in her room as she lit up in one of the recreation rooms.

But she was delighted that there was *beer* at the bar, that the youth hostel did not close its doors until half past midnight and that even late in the evening amusing people could be met there.

In fact at midnight the eight-storey building was like a dovecot. Anyone who was not well on the way to dreamland in his or her bunk then would be rudely awakened without any doubt.

The door opened noisely, two Americans, wiry, wearing leather jackets and T-shirts, carrying huge rucksacks, came in, put on the light and threw themselves, clothed and unwashed, on unoccupied matresses.

The West German network of youth hostels ranges from modern guest houses to half-timbered buildings that have been renovated in the countryside like romantic, but uncomfortable, old castles, in large cities as if they were in isolated rural settings.

The differences in comfort are reflected in the prices charged: one night with breakfast in a "simple" youth hostel costs DM11.20, in a youth guest house DM18.

Not only are the furnishings different from youth hostel to youth hostel but also the people who stay in them.

City youth hostels are much preferred by schoolboys and girls and school outings. There are also a lot of loners who hitch-hike from one major city to the next in Europe.

The trend today is, however, for more and more clubs and associations to hold their conferences in youth hostels.

The picture is different in the countryside. Many groups stay at youth hostels in the country for holidays, particularly church groups and associations linked to a charity. They are cyclist groups or young people travelling on mopeds.

There is a trend noticeable here also; family holidays that have been much publicised by the youth hostel organisation.

Many families regard a holiday in a youth hostel in beautiful surroundings as ideal. The Zundels from Essen, for [illegible] their eight children at the youth hostel at Bad Münstereifel. Two rooms were reserved for them.

Financially the youth hostel holiday for the Essen family was a very good deal: the parents had to pay DM1,935 for two weeks bed, breakfast and evening meal for themselves and their eight children. No charge was made for the two youngest, aged under four.

The youth hostel idea is 68 years old. In 1909 elementary schoolteacher Richard Schirrmann was taken unawares by a summer shower while out hiking with his class in the Bröhltal.

The local village teacher came to the rescue and let Herr Schirrmann's pupils stay the night in the village school.

This decided him that a system should be devised to provide schoolboys and girls, keen on hiking, with cheap overnight accommodation.

Three years later he equipped Burg Altena in the Sauerland with 15 palliasses and foot baths. The first German youth hostel went into operation.

This developed was in tune with the anti-civilisation spirit of the 1920s. The call from the youth movement, the Wandervogel youth movement and the guitar players of the time was "out from the grey city walls" to try and find refuge from hideous modernity in unspoilt surroundings.

In 1933 the youth hostel movement was taken over by the Hitler Youth.

After the Second World War the German Youth Hostels Association (DJH) developed into a giant. Last year it boasted more than one million members, and last year the Association recorded 8,803,844 overnight stays at its hostels.

Something of the founder's vision of providing homely accommodation for tired, young hikers, has been lost. As late as the 1960s criticism of the ideal of the simple, natural, healthy life were loud.

The youth hostel organisation was [illegible] the clouds with its romantic image of hiking in the country. Its regulations were Prussian, just as in the times of Kaiser Wilhelm.

The youth hostels have now changed their ways. Old rules that girls should not wear trousers have disappeared from youth hostel walls. Regulations that the hostels were open only to hikers have long since disappeared.

But the youth hostel organisation continues to apply rules separating the sexes and prohibiting drink.

The main changes to be seen are in the comfort now offered.

Guests still have to make their own beds but showers have been installed almost everywhere. There are now television, table tennis and hobby rooms, and even discos in today's youth hostels.

Nevertheless the DJH management in Detmold is frustrated that the old image of youth hostels still persists among the general public.

Press spokesman Bert Pichel said: "Youth hostels still conjure up the image of rough, woollen blankets, dormitories and stew to eat."

In fact the proverbial youth hostel stew (Eintopf) is the exception rather than the rule. Catering at the hostels is now up to hotel standards but the prices are kept down.

The role of the youth hostel warden has also changed considerably. Formerly he was an authoritarian "nature boy" with a bushy beard and knee breeches.

But today he is like a manager under stress who only wants to be master of the organisation's computer programming.

Many youth hostel wardens complain that they are over-worked, but value their independence which attracts people from varying walks of life, from tradesmen to theologians.

Günter Kralik, warden at the youth hostel on Bonn's Venusberg, said: "This is certainly a trying job. You often have to work 16 hours a day, but I can divide up my work without having to ask anyone."

Guests at a youth hostel no longer regard the warden as "a senior schoolmaster." It would be asking too much and it would be hopeless.

Hans-Joachim Drewniok of the Riehl guest house said: "We can appeal to our guests to be quiet at nights and not to smoke in the rooms, but we cannot really throw people out."

The development of overnight stays over the past year or so has not been satisfactory from the DJH point of view.

In 1978 there was the record number of almost eleven million overnight stays, but that dropped to 8.8 million last year.

Youth hostels in cities do well, but the counrtyside hostels have had a bad time.

One main reason for this is that charitable organisations are no longer offering so many holidays as they used to do because grants have had to be cut as an economy measure.

In addition there has been a drop in the number of boys and girls at school.

Activities

With a view to making an overnight stay in a youth hostel more attractive youth hostel wardens organise interesting activities.

Ruth Wittmers, wardress at the Kronenberg youth hostel in the Südeifel, goes with her guests looking for herbs. Others organise hikes for the day and grill parties.

The youth hostel organisation hopes to counter the downward trend by increased public relations and drives to reach target groups.

It is hoped that youth hostels will become more attractive for the handicapped and, in view of the thaw in West German-East German relations, it is hoped that there will be more exchanges with young people from the German Democratic Republic.

Markus Schwering

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, Cologne, 15 October 1987)

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necessary provocation" and asked her superiors to change things for the sake of peace in the barracks.

She said: "Girls are now accommodated in dormitories."

The Belgian Army is 90,000 strong, including 3,417 women. One has reached the rank of captain.

And how do women get on in an army of men?

When they were put into quarters they were told: "You can have one friend, but make sure you don't get pregnant."

Thinking of her training Ingrid Baeck said that the girls were not really bothered much, "but we were happy when, at the end of a year, almost everyone of us had a steady friend. From then on we were taboo for the others."

Ingrid Baeck's friend of her training period is now her husband with the same rank of first lieutenant.

They cook and clean the house together, but Ingrid Baeck alone takes care of the laundry and the uniforms.

On manoeuvres they are separated because they serve in different arms of the service.

On manoeuvres she changes her tailor-made uniforms (she has ten which she has paid for herself) for boots, steel helmet and dungarees.

She has had the training every fully-trained soldier has had. She commanded a supply and transport unit. When she arrived in the morning she learned to pitch her voice in command higher and sometimes she put a recruit under arrest.

She finds nothing extraordinary in all this. She has been used to the military life since she was a child. Her father was a major in the regular army.

She admits that her venture into the armed forces has given her a great deal of pleasure. She is proud of her unfeminine profession.

When she attracts everyone's attention at an official evening reception, wearing a long, blue evening gown, it is very pleasant, she says.

The five senior female officers in the Bundeswehr make sure that their femininity is obvious in their uniforms, said Dr Ranihildis Genius-Herrguth, a colonel in rank and head of the neurological and psychiatric department at the main military hospital at Koblenz.

She was also a pioneer when, ten years ago, the Bundeswehr admitted women for a career as officers in the military medical service.

Unlike the young Belgian women Dr Genius-Herrguth did not have to go through a period of basic military training.

She has a short-service commission and was shown when she joined up the differences in rank, brisk forms of command, and was told how much of her hair could show from under her helmet.

She said: "We went on a couple of night manoeuvres and learned how to get over a small stream."

In serious matters she can get private coaching from her husband, a lieutenant-colonel at the air force press department in Wahn, a suburb of Cologne.

She could order her husband about for she is senior in rank, but in private life he seems to play the leading role.

There is little to recall the army in her work as a medical officer except perhaps the epaulettes she wears on her white doctor's coat and the warrant officer who sits outside her consulting room rather than a nursing sister.

Although the regulations do not require it once a year she takes part in a firing practice course.

An instructor said that she was a good shot, "and why not? The best civilian shot in the world is a woman."

Asked how she would react when it came to shooting in action she said that she would only fire in self-defence or to defend her patients. "I would never attack. As a psychiatrist I am mainly concerned with talking to people."

Generally speaking Dr Genius-Herrguth believes that if women are given the same opportunities as men in the armed services, "they must also be prepared to perform to the same standards."

Ute Kaltwasser

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, Cologne, 26 October 1987)